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Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2348 (2017), in which the Council requested me to report to it every six months on the implementation of the commitments made under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.[1] It provides an overview of peace and security developments in the Great Lakes region since the issuance of my previous report (S/2017/825) and covers the period from 15 September 2017 to 28 February 2018. The report also sets out my vision on furthering the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, as requested in Security Council resolution 2389 (2017).

II. Major developments

A. Security situation

2. During the period under review, the security situation in the Great Lakes region was marked by persistent conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and the Central African Republic; continued activities by armed groups; and slow progress in the repatriation of disarmed foreign combatants. Continuing tensions around political processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi further contributed to instability in the region.

3. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the security situation remains a cause for serious concern. Non-State armed groups continued to attack civilians and target Congolese security and defence forces and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). As detailed in my report on MONUSCO dated 5 January 2018 (S/2018/16), a number of

[1] In this context, the region includes the 13 signatories of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, namely, Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, the Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. In addition, the following four intergovernmental organizations act as witnesses/guarantors of the Framework: the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community and the United Nations

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Mai-Mai groups opposed to the Government joined forces in coalitions, such as the Mouvement national pour le renouveau and the Coalition nationale du peuple pour la souveraineté du Congo. Of note was the attack by Mai-Mai Yakutumba on Uvira, the second largest city in South Kivu, on 28 September, which was repelled by MONUSCO and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC). On 8 February, the newly appointed FARDC commander for Operation Sukola II in South Kivu, General Philemon Yav, announced that FARDC operations had resulted in the death of 83 Mai-Mai Yakutumba elements and 6 FARDC soldiers, as well as the capture of 120 Mai-Mai elements. He added that almost all localities formerly under the control of the armed group had been recovered by FARDC, including the Ubwari Peninsula and the coastline of Lake Tanganyika from Kalemie to Uvira.

4. On 11 October, a coalition of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda/Forces combattantes abacunguzi (FDLR-FOCA) and Nyatura attacked Bwiza, Rutshuru territory, killing three officers of the Congolese National Police and five civilians. In a separate development, a former leader of FDLR, Colonel Evariste Nizeyimana, voluntarily surrendered to MONUSCO on 17 December. He was transferred to the Congolese authorities on the understanding that the death penalty would not be applied.

5. In another worrisome development, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) stepped up their attacks after a lull in activities. On 9 October, suspected ADF elements attacked a MONUSCO base in Beni territory, North Kivu. Two Tanzanian peacekeepers were killed and 18 injured. On 7 December, the Mission suffered the heaviest loss in recent memory when presumed ADF elements attacked a MONUSCO contingent in Semuliki, North Kivu, killing 15 Tanzanian peacekeepers and wounding 43 others. On 22 December, the Uganda People's Defence Forces stated that they had launched air attacks on ADF camps in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, reportedly killing 100 rebels. On 13 January, FARDC announced the launch of an offensive operation against ADF and other armed groups in the Beni and neighbouring Lubero areas in North Kivu. On 14 January in Entebbe, Uganda, the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, in his capacity as Chair of the East African Community, convened a meeting of the military and intelligence chiefs of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania to review the security situation in the region. The Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Africa were also represented. Participants agreed on the need for a coordinated approach to neutralize ADF, including through the operationalization of the Joint Follow-up Mechanism in Kasese, Uganda.

6. Insecurity also continued in the border areas in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In one incident, on 15 September, FARDC soldiers reportedly killed 36 and injured 117 Burundian asylum seekers who had been protesting the detention of Burundian nationals in South Kivu. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo stated that the soldiers had acted in self-defence, as they had been attacked by armed elements within the group. It announced that it had opened an inquiry into the incident. On 13 February, clashes reportedly broke out between the Rwanda Defence Force and FARDC in Virunga National Park, in North Kivu Province. At the request of both countries, the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region launched an investigation into the incident.

7. In a separate development, the Vice Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Léonard She Okitundu, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Burundi, Alain Aimé Nyamitwe, met in Bujumbura on 24 and 25 October to discuss

border security, including the neutralization of negative forces and the stabilization of the Ruzizi plains, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

8. There has been no significant progress in the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations, including the repatriation of elements of the former Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) still in Rwanda and Uganda. In a report published on 4 December, Human Rights Watch alleged that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo had recruited at least 200 former M23 militants in neighbouring countries to help suppress public protests by opposition supporters. The Government refuted the allegations. For its part, the political leadership of the former M23 claimed, in a statement dated 4 December, that the Government had covertly recruited deserters and other undisciplined elements expelled from its ranks.

9. Meanwhile, a technical committee set up by the Ugandan authorities discussed the granting of legal status to the former M23 combatants living in Uganda. On 4 January, the committee recommended that a refugee eligibility committee hold hearings on the 263 former M23 combatants still in Bihanga camp. Those deemed eligible would be relocated after undergoing a rehabilitation, reinsertion and reintegration programme.

10. No progress was recorded regarding the repatriation to Rwanda of FDLR ex-combatants and their dependants who remain in Congolese transit camps.

11. There was progress, however, in the relocation of elements of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) accommodated in MONUSCO premises. As of January 2018, 256 SPLM/A-IO elements out of an initial total of 627 had relocated to third countries as a result of joint efforts by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO.

12. In South Sudan, fighting between forces of the Sudan People's Liberation Army and the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition continued, despite the signing of a new cessation of hostilities agreement by the warring parties that took effect on 24 December. As a consequence, new influxes of South Sudanese refugees were recorded in the Provinces of Haut-Uélé and Ituri in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

13. Continued instability and an upsurge of violence in the Central African Republic continued to affect the region. Increasingly fractured armed actors with loose affiliations to anti-balaka or ex-Séléka factions and driven by competition over resources carried out attacks mostly along ethnic and confessional lines. Clashes between rival militias broke out in Bangui and Ouham-Pendé prefecture in western Central African Republic. As a result, thousands of refugees crossed the border into the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

B. Political developments

14. Delays in electoral processes and disagreements over election results, as well as disputed constitutional amendments, perpetuated tensions and unrest in some countries in the region.

15. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Independent National Electoral Commission published an electoral calendar on 5 November, postponing the presidential, legislative and provincial elections until 23 December 2018. On 24 December, the President, Joseph Kabila, promulgated an amended electoral law and the 2018 Finance Law, which allocated $619 million to the upcoming elections. On 31 January, the Commission announced the completion of voter registration in the Kasai provinces, marking a key electoral milestone. According to estimates by the

Commission, over 46 million potential voters have been registered countrywide, 47 per cent of whom are women.

16. The overall political climate in the country, however, remained characterized by deep divisions among Congolese stakeholders. On 31 December 2017, on the occasion of the first anniversary of the political agreement of 31 December 2016, which had been brokered by the Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Comité laïc de coordination (CLC), supported by the Catholic Church, opposition parties and a number of civil society groups and mainstream opposition stakeholders, including the Félix Tshisekedi-led faction of the Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales de la République démocratique du Congo acquises au changement, organized a march to call for the full implementation of the agreement and a commitment by the President not to seek a third term in office. National security forces in Kinshasa and other cities violently dispersed the protests of 31 December, as well as a subsequent protest organized by CLC on 21 January. The disproportionate use of force by security services during the two protests resulted in 16 people killed, more than 100 injured and around 100 arrested. A demonstration by CLC on 25 February resulted in 2 people killed, 47 injured and 102 arrested. During a press conference held on 26 January, the President reaffirmed that the electoral process was under way, with oversight from the Independent National Electoral Commission and in line with the electoral calendar published on 5 November. On 31 January, during an interview with international media, the Government Spokesperson and Minister of Communications, Lambert Mende, indicated that the presidential majority would announce the name of its candidate in July, in accordance with the electoral calendar.

17. Regional stakeholders and organizations continued to support efforts to break the political impasse and ensure a peaceful transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Chairperson of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, travelled to Kinshasa on 14 and 15 October 2017 to discuss the political and security situation with Mr. Kabila. In a joint statement issued on 15 October, the two Presidents reaffirmed their commitment to the decisions adopted by SADC at its thirty-seventh summit, held in Pretoria on 19 and 20 August 2017, in which SADC, inter alia, called for the continued implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement. The Executive Secretary of SADC, Stergomena Tax, travelled to Kinshasa from 30 January to 2 February to examine progress and challenges in the preparations for the elections. In a press briefing, she expressed satisfaction at the progress achieved and called for concerted support for the electoral process from the international community.

18. A delegation of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union visited Kinshasa from 22 to 26 October. In a communiqué dated 7 November, the Peace and Security Council, inter alia, welcomed the publication of the electoral calendar and called upon all Congolese actors to exercise restraint, favour dialogue and respect the electoral calendar. It also called for the establishment of a coordination mechanism comprising the countries in the region, the African Union, SADC, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Economic Community of Central African States, the United Nations and the European Union to ensure effective and coherent support for a political solution in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Subsequently, a senior official of the African Union Commission held meetings with Mr. Kabila and other Congolese stakeholders on 11 January in Kinshasa. Speaking at the opening of the thirtieth African Union Summit, on 28 January, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, stated that recent tensions and violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had again underscored the importance of fully implementing the 31 December 2016 agreement, with a view to holding elections by December 2018.

19. On 9 December, the President of the Congo, Denis Sassou Nguesso, in his dual capacity as Chair of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and Chair of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, hosted a tripartite summit with the leaders of Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to review preparations for the electoral process and assess the implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement. On 14 February, Mr. Sassou Nguesso and the President of Angola, João Lourenço, visited Kinshasa for a second tripartite summit with Mr. Kabila. In a communiqué issued after the summit, they expressed their commitment to peaceful elections, welcomed the progress achieved in the "consensual process emanating from the 31 December agreement" and called upon all stakeholders "to exercise restraint". They also called for the urgent implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and the Nairobi Declarations. They agreed to meet again in April 2018 in Luanda.

20. In Burundi, the political situation remained fragile. On 24 October, the Council of Ministers discussed proposed constitutional amendments, including the replacement of the current two five-year presidential terms with two seven-year terms. The Government has stated its intention to put the amendments to a referendum. Members of the opposition criticized the proposed amendments, noting that a referendum under the current political conditions would not be free or fair. Furthermore, various Burundian stakeholders and partners raised concerns that the proposed revisions could reverse some of the gains that had accrued from the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi.

21. The East African Community convened the fourth session of the inter-Burundi dialogue from 27 November to 8 December in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, facilitated by the former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Benjamin Mkapa. Following the session, Burundian opposition groups met in Nairobi on 26 and 27 January. On 19 February, they sent a communiqué to Mr. Mkapa, expressing concern over the proposed constitutional changes and the absence of political space. On 23 February, the East African Community held its nineteenth ordinary summit of Heads of State in Munyonyo, Uganda. The summit expressed appreciation for the efforts of Mr. Mkapa and Mr. Museveni in facilitating and mediating the inter-Burundi dialogue and indicated that the East African Community would continue to lead the process.

22. On 21 October, security forces in the United Republic of Tanzania reportedly arrested senior leaders of the Forces populaires du Burundi, including the leader of the armed group, General Jérémie Ntiranyibagira, and the second in command, Colonel Edouard Nshimirimana. Reports as to whether the two leaders were extradited to Burundi have not been confirmed.

23. With regard to South Sudan, from 18 to 22 December the Intergovernmental Authority on Development organized in Addis Ababa the first phase of the high-level forum on the revitalization of the 2015 peace agreement. On 21 December, the parties signed an Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access. The second phase of the talks commenced on 5 February, dealing with, inter alia, power-sharing and governance issues. The talks were adjourned on 19 February.

24. In Kenya, the political environment deteriorated amid divisions over the rerun of the presidential election of 26 October, following a ruling by the country's Supreme Court in September. The incumbent President, Uhuru Kenyatta, won more than 98 per cent of the vote and was sworn in for a second term on 28 November. The leader of the opposition National Super Alliance, Raila Odinga, refused to recognize Mr. Kenyatta's re-election. On 30 January, the Alliance organized a ceremony to swear in Mr. Odinga as the "People's President". In reaction, the Government of

Kenya issued a statement calling the ceremony an attempt to subvert the legally constituted Government. It announced its decision to conduct an investigation. The Government also temporarily shut down some media houses that had broadcast the ceremony.

25. In Uganda, a parliamentary bill that removes from the country's Constitution the age limit for the President and local leaders was enacted on 27 December. Opposition and some civil society groups criticized the move and filed petitions against the bill in the High Court. On 2 January, the leader of the opposition Forum for Democratic Change, Kizza Besigye, called for a defiance campaign against the Government.

26. On 14 February, Jacob Zuma resigned as President of South Africa. Cyril Ramaphosa of the African National Congress will serve as President of South Africa until 2019, when he is expected to run in the presidential election.

C. Humanitarian situation

27. Ongoing conflicts, political tensions and food insecurity continued to affect millions of people across the Great Lakes region, causing an alarming humanitarian crisis and further undermining regional stability. Close to 11 million people have been forcibly displaced. Yet despite rising needs, funding for humanitarian operations remained inadequate. As of mid-February 2018, two regional refugee response plans totalling $1.891 billion had been launched for South Sudan and Burundi, and the response plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo was being drafted.

28. The humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo deteriorated drastically in 2017. There are over 4.4 million internally displaced persons, more than double the amount recorded in 2016. This is the largest population of internally displaced persons in any country on the African continent. In addition, the Democratic Republic of the Congo hosted over 537,000 refugees from other African countries, and influxes from Burundi, the Central African Republic and South Sudan continued. Conversely, over 683,000 Congolese lived as refugees in neighbouring countries. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, the Democratic Republic of the Congo was, for the second consecutive year, the country worst affected by conflict-related displacement in the world. In the light of the dramatic increase in humanitarian needs, the United Nations activated the highest level of emergency preparedness in the Provinces of Kasai, Tanganyika and South Kivu and supported the development of a humanitarian response plan, which requires $1.68 billion to address the urgent needs of 10.5 million people.

29. In South Sudan, the humanitarian crisis reached emergency levels. More than 7 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance, including nearly 2 million internally displaced persons. There were over 2.4 million South Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers, more than 1 million of whom are in Uganda, which remained the largest refugee host country in Africa, with more than 1.4 million refugees in total.

30. A sharp increase in humanitarian needs was also reported in the Central African Republic, with over 542,000 people having fled to neighbouring countries. Over 688,000 people were internally displaced, an increase of 70 per cent from early 2017.

31. The humanitarian situation in Burundi remained dire. An estimated 180,000 people were internally displaced, and close to 425,000 were refugees in neighbouring countries. Of the more than 250,000 Burundian refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania, some 13,000 have returned home on a voluntary basis. On 9 February, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, John Magufuli, announced that the

country was withdrawing from the comprehensive refugee response framework, citing insecurity and the lack of international funding.

32. The cessation of refugee status for Rwandan refugees in various host countries entered into effect on 31 December 2017. However, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has not invoked the cessation clause, nor has it pronounced on a possible date for the cessation of refugee status or on arrangements for durable solutions, for instance, local integration for those affected. Despite voluntary returns on a large scale, totalling around 18,000 in 2017, the country continues to host an estimated 220,000 Rwandan refugees. The organized voluntary repatriation of Rwandan refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo has continued into early 2018.

D. Human rights

33. Serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law continued to be reported, especially in countries affected by conflicts and political and electoral crises. Those violations include extrajudicial and arbitrary executions, enforced disappearances, rape and other forms of sexual violence, restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, and arbitrary arrests and detentions.

34. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, human rights violations were increasingly reported. In a separate development, on 15 December, the International Criminal Court decided that the former President of the Union des patriotes congolais/Forces patriotiques pour la libération du Congo, Thomas Lubanga, was liable for $10 million in collective reparations to former child soldiers.

35. On 26 October, the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi, established by the Human Rights Council, presented its report to the Third Committee of the General Assembly. The report documented serious human rights violations, including the repression and intimidation of civilians and opposition members, committed since the beginning of the crisis in 2015. The report also noted that most violations were committed by State agents, including intelligence services, the police and the army, with support from the youth league of the ruling party, known as Imbonerakure.

36. On 25 October, the International Criminal Court announced its decision to open an investigation into alleged crimes against humanity committed in Burundi, or by Burundian nationals outside the country, between April 2015 and October 2017. The Court argued that there were reasonable grounds to believe that State agents and groups implementing State policies, together with the Imbonerakure, had launched a widespread and systematic attack against Burundian civilians. On 27 October, Burundi withdrew from the Rome Statute and thus became the first country to leave the International Criminal Court.

37. In South Sudan, all parties to the conflict continued to commit gross human rights violations. The Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, established in March 2016, collected several accounts of incidents during a visit to the country in December 2017.

38. In the Central African Republic, serious violations of human rights continued. In a communiqué dated 11 October, the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide expressed concern about the scope of the criminal atrocities committed with impunity by armed groups and condemned the incitement to ethnic and religious hatred instigated by armed groups and accomplice politicians.

III. Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

39. During the reporting period, signatory countries continued to uphold their commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, despite significant challenges, including ongoing activities by negative forces in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region; the slow repatriation of disarmed combatants present in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in neighbouring countries; and ongoing conflicts and political crises in Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, all with significant cross-border implications.

A. Commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

40. Further information on the implementation of the national commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is contained in my most recent report on MONUSCO (S/2018/174).

B. Commitments of the region

41. The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and SADC, together with other subregional organizations, including the East African Community, continued to collaborate with the African Union and the United Nations to address political and security challenges in the region.

42. On 19 October, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region held its seventh ordinary summit of Heads of State and Government in Brazzaville. With regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, member States of the International Conference called for the implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement. They also urged relevant stakeholders to accelerate the repatriation to Rwanda of FDLR ex-combatants who remain in Congolese transit camps, and to urgently convene a meeting to review implementation of the commitments of the Nairobi Declarations with regard to M23.

43. In addition, member States of the Conference called for the rapid operationalization of the Joint Follow-up Mechanism, created to coordinate regional efforts to neutralize ADF. They also recommended the strengthening of operations conducted by FARDC against negative forces, with support from the Intervention Brigade of the MONUSCO force. At the summit, the Congo took over as Chair of the Conference from Angola.

44. On 23 February in Kampala, the East African Community held its fourth retreat for Heads of State on infrastructure and health financing and development, which was focused on deepening and widening regional integration through infrastructure and health sector development. Initiatives to boost transport, energy, civil aviation and cross-border health services were identified.

C. Commitments of the international community

45. On 12 October, at a meeting of the International Contact Group for the Great Lakes Region held in The Hague, Netherlands, participants reviewed the political, security and humanitarian developments in the Great Lakes region, in particular in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi. They reiterated the centrality of

the 31 December 2016 agreement and called for more proactive and concerted action by the members of the Contact Group.

46. Other international partners continued to support the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, including Norway, which the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region visited on 19 February to meet the State Secretary of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of International Development and other stakeholders. Norway renewed its yearly financial support to the Special Envoy's trust fund for the implementation of his road map.

47. With a view to enhancing efforts by regional organizations to implement the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, my Special Envoy met with the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, Zachary Muburi-Muita, in Bujumbura on 16 November. He also met the new Special Representative of the African Union for the Great Lakes Region and Head of the African Union Liaison Office in Burundi, Basile Ikouébé, in Nairobi on 20 December. Furthermore, my Special Envoy met the Executive Secretary of SADC on 6 February in Gaborone. Discussions included the need for resolute action to neutralize negative forces, repatriate disarmed foreign combatants and their dependants and support dialogue and political processes in the region. During my Special Envoy's meeting with the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the two agreed on joint activities in the areas of women's empowerment, natural resources, displacement and judicial cooperation.

48. On 22 January, my Special Envoy convened a biannual meeting with United Nations Resident Coordinators and Regional Directors, with a view to promoting a shared analysis of political and security developments in the Great Lakes region, reiterating the need to address cross-border issues and ensuring that programmatic interventions are aligned with the political objectives stated in the road map of the Special Envoy.

IV. Implementation of the road map of the Special Envoy

A. Oversight mechanisms of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

49. On 2 October, the Technical Support Committee held its nineteenth meeting in Nairobi to prepare the eighth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. The Committee reviewed the recommendations from its field visit to the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in September, especially with regard to the neutralization of negative forces, the repatriation of ex-combatants and new security concerns.

50. On 19 October, following the seventh ordinary summit of Heads of State and Government of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Congo hosted the eighth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, held in Brazzaville. The President of the Congo took over from the President of Angola as Chair of the Mechanism. The meeting was preceded by a gathering of ministers for foreign affairs on 17 October, at which the report and recommendations of the Technical Support Committee were endorsed.

51. With regard to negative forces, the Regional Oversight Mechanism called for the strengthening of the Intervention Brigade of the MONUSCO force. The leaders of the region also called for the repatriation, without conditions, and no later than 20 October 2018, of disarmed FDLR combatants and their dependants still in camps

in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and of ex-M23 members who remain in Rwanda and Uganda. The leaders also recommended the reactivation of the regional follow-up mechanism to expedite the repatriation process.

52. The Regional Oversight Mechanism noted that, despite delays, the 31 December 2016 agreement remained a viable framework for resolving the political crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In this regard, regional leaders stressed the need to implement confidence-building measures, publish a consensual electoral calendar and pass the requisite electoral legislation and an electoral budget.

53. Regional leaders also expressed concern over the increasing displacement of populations in the Great Lakes region over the past year. They encouraged my Special Envoy to hold consultations with relevant stakeholders to further promote durable solutions to displacement.

54. On the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, my Special Envoy and the African Union Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region hosted a meeting on 26 and 27 February at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa to review the implementation of the Framework. Experts and representatives of signatory countries, guarantor institutions, international partners and civil society noted the progress made, including through the neutralization and weakening of some negative forces; cooperation on security, economic and judicial matters; and greater ownership of the Framework by the signatory countries. They observed, however, that progress is still modest compared to the expectations raised by the Framework, as evidenced by persisting conflict, political crises, the continued presence of armed groups, illegal cross-border activities and the ongoing displacement crisis. Participants noted, however, that the Framework remains a relevant vehicle to promote dialogue and cooperation and to assist countries and institutions in the region in achieving peace.

55. On 28 February, the Technical Support Committee held its twentieth meeting in Addis Ababa, co-chaired by my Special Envoy and the African Union Special Representative. The Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, a senior official of SADC and my Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of MONUSCO also attended. The Committee, building on the conclusions of the workshop, recognized that continued tensions and mistrust among the core countries in the region were impeding progress. They called for greater political commitment and confidence-building among those countries and for enhanced diplomatic efforts, as a matter of priority. The Committee agreed on its workplan for 2018. Committee members further decided to follow up on key decisions made during the eighth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, held in Brazzaville on 19 October, with a particular focus on the strengthening of the Intervention Brigade of the MONUSCO force and the repatriation of former combatants.

B. Good offices of the Special Envoy

Negative forces

56. My Special Envoy met the President of the Congo during a visit to Brazzaville from 16 to 19 December. They discussed, inter alia, the neutralization of negative forces and the repatriation of foreign disarmed combatants in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As a result, the President addressed identical letters dated 10 January to me and to the Chairperson of the African Union Commission requesting us to take all actions necessary to strengthen the Intervention Brigade of the MONUSCO force, as recommended by regional leaders at the eighth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism. My Special Envoy also

encouraged Mr. Sassou Nguesso to promote talks between the leaders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda on the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations and the repatriation of former M23 elements still in Rwanda and Uganda. He suggested that Mr. Sassou Nguesso use his good offices as Chair of the Regional Oversight Mechanism and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to help defuse tensions between countries in the region.

57. From 28 January to 1 February, the Office of the Special Envoy dispatched a technical mission to Kinshasa and Goma to develop recommendations, together with MONUSCO, for the follow-up mechanism on the repatriation of disarmed FDLR combatants in transit camps in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and ex-M23 elements in Rwanda and Uganda.

Support to dialogue and political processes in the region

Democratic Republic of the Congo

58. During the period under review, my Special Envoy undertook a number of initiatives to promote a harmonized regional and international approach in support of a consensual electoral process and full implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement.

59. In this regard, on 5 October, my Special Envoy travelled to Pretoria to meet the Minister for International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane. The Minister reaffirmed the readiness of SADC to assist the Democratic Republic of the Congo in efforts to ensure the holding of elections by the end of 2018.

60. My Special Envoy also undertook a series of consultations that led to the holding of a meeting of representatives of the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework on 22 November in Addis Ababa. In preparation for the meeting, my Special Envoy and my Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo held meetings with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, Smaïl Chergui, on 9 and 10 November in Addis Ababa.

61. In a communiqué issued following the meeting of 22 November, the representatives of the guarantors, inter alia, called upon all stakeholders to create the conditions necessary to ensure the holding of timely, peaceful and credible elections. They urged the Government to provide the necessary and timely financial and logistical resources to allow for implementation of the electoral calendar; ensure the required political space throughout the country, including freedom of peaceful assembly and equitable access to State media; and fully and effectively implement the confidence-building measures as stipulated in the 31 December 2016 agreement. They also decided to visit Kinshasa in January 2018 to engage the Congolese stakeholders.

62. My Special Envoy also met separately with representatives of the European External Action Service and with the special envoy of Belgium, Renier Nijskens, in Brussels on 5 and 6 December. Discussions were centred on the political and security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on Burundi and on the regional situation.

63. In his meeting with the President of the Congo held on 18 December, my Special Envoy raised concerns about the continued political impasse in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The President exchanged views with the Special Envoy on the tripartite summit (between Angola, the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo) held in Brazzaville on 9 December, and informed him of the intention of those countries to reconvene in Kinshasa in early 2018. The Special Envoy committed to coordinate and align the guarantors' initiatives with the efforts of the Presidents of

the Congo and Angola. It was therefore agreed that the planned visit to Kinshasa by the guarantors should be postponed to give precedence to the tripartite summit, which took place on 14 February.

Kenya

64. Together with the Resident Coordinator, my Special Envoy supported the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi and contributed to the joint United Nations task force established to monitor developments related to the electoral process in Kenya and promote dialogue and reconciliation among stakeholders. Furthermore, at my request, the former President of Nigeria and member of the High-level Advisory Board on Mediation, Olusegun Obasanjo, visited Kenya on 17 and 18 January to encourage dialogue between the President of Kenya and the leader of the National Super Alliance coalition, Raila Odinga.

Promotion of women, youth and civil society

65. During the reporting period, the Office of the Special Envoy continued to promote the role of women in peace and political processes in the region. In September, women representatives participated in the field visit of the Technical Support Committee to the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Subsequently, regional leaders agreed, at the eighth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, to address the situation of women and children in transit camps for disarmed FDLR elements as a matter of urgency. On 22 February in Nairobi, the Advisory Board of the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework held its ninth meeting. Senior women leaders, including the former President of the Central African Republic, Catherine Samba-Panza, the former Vice-President of Uganda, Speciosa Wandira Kazibwe, the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women and Peace and Security, Bineta Diop, and the former Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, Liberata Mulamula, attended the meeting. The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Isabelle Durant, also contributed via video link. Participants recommended greater support to the women and peace and security agenda in the region and the organization of missions to Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan by the Women's Platform and the Regional Women's Forum of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to promote the role of women in peace and political processes. They encouraged the convening of a meeting of ministers for gender to endorse the regional plan of action for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and to address shrinking space for women in political processes in the region.

66. Thanks to resource mobilization efforts by the Office of the Special Envoy, grants were allocated to grass-roots women's organizations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi. The grants are supporting confidence-building and conflict prevention in the region, including through projects on women's economic empowerment, the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and human rights awareness.

67. The Office of the Special Envoy promoted the participation of youth leaders from the Great Lakes region in the Youth Forum of the Economic and Social Council, held in New York on 30 and 31 January, on the theme "The role of youth in building sustainable and resilient urban and rural communities". On 29 January, the Great Lakes youth delegation met my Envoy on Youth to discuss how to advance the youth development agenda, including ways to promote the implementation of the recommendations of the ministerial meeting on youth held in June 2017 in Livingstone, Zambia, which was supported by the Office of the Special Envoy.

Displacement

68. The Office of the Special Envoy continued to call the attention of regional and international stakeholders to the refugee and displacement situation in the Great Lakes region. On 22 January in Nairobi, my Special Envoy convened a meeting of the United Nations regional team and other partners at the principals level to discuss opportunities to leverage the mandate of the Special Envoy on displacement-related issues. They also discussed plans for a stakeholder meeting to be organized jointly by the Office of the Special Envoy and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to raise awareness on the situation of internally displaced persons and make recommendations on durable solutions for displacement.

Judicial cooperation

69. Following the successful launch of the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network in November 2016, the Directors of Public Prosecution of member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region convened on 1 and 2 November in Khartoum for the first meeting of the Network. The initiative was supported by the Office of the Special Envoy and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The Network aims to facilitate and improve cooperation among members on judicial matters, including extraditions, joint investigations and mutual legal assistance, training and the exchange of best practices.

Natural resources

70. The Office of the Special Envoy continued to cooperate with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the European Union, the United Nations Environment Programme and other partners to follow up on the expert and stakeholder consultations on natural resources in the region held on 5 and 6 July 2017. Efforts were also focused on preparations for the second meeting of the Judicial Cooperation Network, to be held in Kampala later in 2018, which will deal with the challenges posed by criminal networks with regard to the exploitation of resources. On 28 November in New York, representatives of the Office of the Special Envoy and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region jointly briefed the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the implementation of the Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources of the International Conference.

Private Sector Investment Conference for the Great Lakes Region

71. The Office of the Special Envoy, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Rwanda Convention Bureau finalized a memorandum of understanding outlining the division of responsibilities in preparation for the second Private Sector Investment Conference for the Great Lakes Region, slated for later in 2018 in Rubavu, Rwanda. The conference aims to promote cross-border investment in the extractive industries, agriculture, tourism and infrastructure in the core countries of the Great Lakes region.

Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework

72. Following my Special Envoy's engagement with senior European Union officials on the implementation of the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework, detailed in my previous report, the European Development Fund approved, on 14 November, a €1.5 million peace and security grant to the Great Lakes cross-border multi-partner trust fund. The funds will support regional projects for women's empowerment, the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration of

ex-combatants and the forums of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (on women, youth, civil society and the private sector). The Peacebuilding Fund finalized the approval of a $2 million cross-border project addressing displacement between Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania under the Regional Strategic Framework. The project was launched on 1 January. In a visit to Brussels on 6 December, my Special Envoy engaged officials of the European Commission to mobilize additional support.

73. On 27 November, my Special Envoy and the Head of the Peacebuilding Support Office briefed the Peacebuilding Commission on the need to support the approach outlined in the Regional Strategic Framework. They also convened a panel discussion with experts and representatives of Member States, the World Bank, other international organizations and civil society to discuss programmatic and funding opportunities to support cross-border priorities in the Great Lakes region.

74. On 23 January, my Special Envoy and the Regional Director for Southern Africa of the World Food Programme, representing the Chair of the Regional United Nations Development Group, co-chaired the second meeting of the Management Board of the Regional Strategic Framework. Participants reviewed progress and challenges faced by the six pillars of the Regional Strategic Framework and agreed to extend its validity to 2020.

75. On 24 January, my Special Envoy convened a meeting in Addis Ababa with the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and representatives of Burundi, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania, as well as the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security and the African Union Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region. Participants discussed key regional issues and how to increase awareness of and support for the Regional Strategic Framework. They also discussed ways to revitalize the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries.

V. Implementation of paragraph 24 of Security Council resolution 2389 (2017)

76. The Security Council, in its resolution 2389 (2017), invited me to engage in high-level dialogue, in collaboration with the African Union, the signatory States and the guarantor institutions of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, as well as key regional and international partners, to assess progress, challenges and shortcomings in the implementation of the Framework and to present my vision, supported by concrete recommendations. In this regard, at the African Union Summit held on 28 and 29 January in Addis Ababa, I engaged with the leaders of signatory countries on the situation in the region. Furthermore, my Special Envoy conducted consultations with key stakeholders, including at the workshop held on 26 and 27 February on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and at the twentieth meeting of the Technical Support Committee, held on 28 February, as reported in paragraphs 54 and 55 above.

77. On the basis of the consultations, immediate priorities and guiding principles are described below, which should inform the vision of the United Nations for the region in the coming years.

Immediate priorities

78. Achieving peace in countries experiencing political crises and armed conflict should remain the first priority, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, South Sudan and the Central African Republic. Ensuring a peaceful electoral

process and transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is paramount, as the country remains at the heart of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. Furthermore, we must ensure an end to the fighting and an inclusive and lasting political settlement in South Sudan, given the scale of the atrocities being committed, the suffering of the population and the implications for the region.

79. Second, more must be done to neutralize non-State armed groups in the region. In addition to increasing the effectiveness of ongoing military operations by FARDC, supported by the MONUSCO Intervention Brigade, we will need to strengthen our non-military initiatives. We must consider concrete measures to improve disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration and to prevent recruitment of the population, especially youth, by non-State armed groups. We must also look at ways to curb illegal financial flows to armed groups while maximizing the positive potential of the exploitation of natural resources in the region.

80. Third, we need to urgently address the humanitarian crisis resulting from forced displacement in the region, which has reached unprecedented levels over the past year. This will require an increase in humanitarian funding; greater solidarity and cooperation between countries in the region, in pursuit of durable solutions for forced displacement; and enhanced collaboration with regional and international partners to support such solutions.

81. Fourth, promoting and protecting human rights and fighting impunity in the Great Lakes region is critical to achieve the objectives of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. In close collaboration with the African Union and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the United Nations will work with the countries in the region to ensure effective action to support the protection of human rights and basic freedoms enshrined in national constitutions and international instruments.

Guiding principles

82. To support the implementation of these priorities, the United Nations will be guided by the principles set out below on the basis of lessons learned from its experience in the Great Lakes region and elsewhere.

83. First, ownership. I welcome efforts, led by my Special Envoy, to strengthen the governance structures of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. They have led to growing ownership by signatory Governments, as demonstrated by the previous two summits of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, hosted by Angola and the Congo, and the next summit, to be hosted by Uganda. We must continue to promote ownership of the Framework by the signatory States.

84. Second, partnership. We need to strengthen cohesion, promote the complementarity of efforts and ensure a common approach among the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and the international community to prevent conflicts and deliver peace and security in the region. In this regard, we must, among other things, deepen the partnership between the United Nations and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, bearing in mind the complementarity of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region of the International Conference.

VI. Observations and recommendations

85. In my previous report, I highlighted a number of challenges relating to peace and security in the region, including stalled political processes, ongoing activities by armed groups, human rights violations and a worsening humanitarian crisis. The present report shows that these challenges continue to affect the stability of the region and the lives of millions of people. Renewed efforts at the national, regional and international levels are required to achieve sustainable peace in the Great Lakes region and to prevent further crises. I call upon the signatory countries to renew their commitment to the full implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, with enhanced support from the guarantors.

86. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, despite progress on the electoral front, the political, security and humanitarian situation is of great concern. We must spare no effort to avert an escalation of violence in the country. I call upon all stakeholders to fully implement the 31 December 2016 agreement, including through the faithful implementation of the confidence-building measures. I urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to lift the ban on demonstrations and ensure the release of all political prisoners.

87. The United Nations will continue to collaborate with the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, SADC, the European Union and other partners to foster a coordinated regional and international approach to peaceful, timely and credible elections in the country. I encourage the leaders of the region, whose engagement is critical to prevent an escalation of tensions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to remain fully engaged.

88. Uncertainty surrounding the political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is compounded by the persistent activities of local and foreign armed groups in its territory. We must once and for all eliminate the threat posed by these "negative forces", through military operations carried out by FARDC, supported by the Intervention Brigade of the MONUSCO force, on the one hand, and by weakening their political ties and economic lifelines on the other. I take note of the decision taken at the eighth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, which called for the strengthening of the Intervention Brigade. The United Nations will continue its efforts, in collaboration with the troop-contributing countries, to increase the effectiveness of MONUSCO and its Intervention Brigade.

89. I welcome the renewed commitment by the leaders of the region to support the repatriation of disarmed foreign combatants and their dependants in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighbouring countries. I encourage the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to work closely with the leaders to operationalize the follow-up mechanism on the repatriation of disarmed foreign combatants.

90. I remain concerned by the lack of progress in the inter-Burundian dialogue led by the East African Community, despite the efforts of the facilitator, the former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Benjamin Mkapa. The United Nations will continue to support the East African Community and promote an inclusive dialogue. I urge the Government of Burundi to engage in dialogue with all stakeholders and to preserve the legacy of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. Peace in Burundi will also require addressing the human rights situation. I call upon all Burundian stakeholders to cooperate with efforts to ensure respect for human rights.

91. There will not be sustainable peace and stability in the Great Lakes region unless we implement durable solutions for the more than 11 million forcibly displaced

persons in the region. Considering the significant deterioration of the humanitarian situation, my Special Envoy plans to host a stakeholder meeting to highlight the urgency of addressing what humanitarian organizations have termed a "forgotten crisis" and to recommend how to advance durable solutions for the affected populations. I call upon the donor community to step up its support for our efforts in pursuit of durable solutions to displacement.

92. I am pleased that women are increasingly engaged in efforts to advance peace and security in the region. Their participation in political and dialogue processes must be further promoted. The leadership of the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and that of the Regional Women's Forum of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in developing and implementing the regional plan of action for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) is important in this regard.

93. The Great Lakes region will not achieve its full potential without consistent respect for fundamental rights and freedoms and the eradication of impunity for serious crimes. To that effect, the Judicial Cooperation Network should be supported to become an effective mechanism to address priority cases, including those involving alleged perpetrators harboured in signatory countries of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

94. Natural resources must be an asset for peace and development in the Great Lakes region, not a fuel for conflict. The Office of my Special Envoy will continue to collaborate with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and other partners in support of the implementation of the recommendations of the expert and stakeholder meeting on natural resources held in Nairobi on 5 and 6 July 2017.

95. Recognizing the importance of a comprehensive approach to address the root causes of conflict in the region, my Special Envoy and the Chair of the Regional United Nations Development Group Team will continue to rally support for the implementation of the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework.

96. I thank my Special Envoy and his Office and reiterate my appreciation to my former Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of MONUSCO, Maman Sidikou. I am grateful to the leadership of the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and SADC for their efforts to promote peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. I call upon the Security Council and the wider international community to intensify their efforts to support the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and other regional instruments intended to advance peace and stability in the Great Lakes region.

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Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)

Reporting period from 7 November 2017 to 28 February 2018

I. Introduction

1. The present report provides a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) since my report of 16 November 2017 (S/2017/964), including on specific provisions of Security Council resolution 2373 (2017). During the reporting period, there was no progress with regard to the outstanding obligations of the parties under resolution 1701 (2006) or towards a permanent ceasefire. The situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) remained generally calm.

2. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1757 (2007), I extended the mandate of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon from 1 March 2018 for a period of three years, or upon completion of the cases before the Special Tribunal if sooner.

II. Implementation of resolution 1701 (2006)

A. Situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

3. The Israeli and Lebanese authorities continued to reaffirm their commitment to resolution 1701 (2006) and to the cessation of hostilities. Despite the relative calm along the Blue Line and in the area of operations, certain developments during the reporting period, as elaborated upon in this report, led to heightened tensions. The United Nations continued to urge both parties to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric that could lead to incidents and threaten the cessation of hostilities, and to utilize established channels to address concerns. UNIFIL and my Acting Special Coordinator for Lebanon maintained permanent liaison with both parties to de-escalate tensions.

4. Following the announcement by the United States of America of 6 December on Jerusalem, some 24 demonstrations were held in the UNIFIL area of operations. On 17 December, approximately 35 individuals protested near Kafr Kila (Sector East), where they started a small fire in an area near the Israeli technical fence. Israeli soldiers extinguished the fire before releasing tear gas to disperse the crowd. On 21 December, over 300 students assembled peacefully outside the UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura (Sector West), and on 29 December, approximately 300

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individuals protested in Kafr Kila. UNIFIL worked closely with the Lebanese Armed Forces, present during the gatherings, and the Israel Defense Forces, to prevent any escalation.

5. In early December, video footage emerged of Qais al-Khazali, of the Iraqi Shi'te militia Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, visiting South Lebanon in military uniform in the company of Hizbullah representatives. On 9 December, the Prime Minister of Lebanon, Saad Hariri issued a statement asserting that he had contacted military and security officials to investigate and to take measures to prevent any person from carrying out military activities and prevent Qais al-Khazali's re-entry into Lebanon. UNIFIL formally conveyed its concern to the Lebanese Armed Forces about the reported visit and requested an update on the outcome of the investigation. In his letter addressed to me dated 12 December (S/2017/1043), the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations stated that that visit constituted a violation of resolutions 1701 (2006) and 1559 (2004). On 15 January, an arrest warrant was issued in Lebanon for Qais al-Khazali, after the investigation found that he had illegally entered Lebanon.

6. On 26 December, a photograph appeared on social media in which Haj Hamza (Abu al-Abbas), the commander of an Aleppo-based pro-Syrian government militia, Imam al-Baqir Brigade, appears to be standing near the Blue Line. In a letter addressed to me dated 5 February (S/2018/91), the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations stated that a senior Iranian official, Ebrahim Raisi, visited the UNIFIL area of operations close to the Blue Line on 28 January and was accompanied by "uniformed and armed members of Hizbullah". UNIFIL cannot confirm this information. On both occasions, UNIFIL formally sought clarification from the Lebanese Armed Forces. Responses from the Lebanese Armed Forces are pending.

7. UNIFIL observed an increase in construction activities, including vegetation clearing and earthworks, along both sides of the Blue Line, on occasion leading to violations of the Blue Line and several incidents of weapons pointing by the parties. On three occasions, UNIFIL liaised with the parties to de-escalate tensions, urging restraint. On 11 November, the Israel Defense Forces fired three smoke grenades, one of which landed across the Blue Line, east of Blida (Sector East) after two Lebanese Armed Forces intelligence staff approached the Blue Line. Two Lebanese Armed Forces soldiers, who were also present, were hospitalized briefly owing to smoke inhalation. On 29 November and 25 December, Lebanese Armed Forces and Israel Defense Forces personnel pointed weapons at each other west of Ayta al-Sha'b (Sector West). Following the latter incident, UNIFIL interposed itself between the sides and remained on the scene for 24 hours to ensure calm.

8. On 20 November, three men near Ayta al-Sha'b, one of whom briefly crossed the Blue Line, shouted towards Israel Defense Forces soldiers. On 26 November, while observers from Observer Group Lebanon were patrolling near Marun al-Ra's (Sector West), an Israel Defense Forces tank pointed its main armament towards the patrol. UNIFIL raised these incidents with both parties, including at the tripartite meeting on 7 December 2017. On 10 February, following military developments in the Syrian theatre involving the downing of an Israel Defense Forces aircraft, individuals in Kafr Kila, Udaysah (both Sector East) and Yaroun (Sector West) threw stones and flags across the Blue Line. The Lebanese Armed Forces intervened on each occasion, moving the crowd away from the Blue Line.

9. From 1 November to 19 February, UNIFIL recorded 204 ground violations of the Blue Line. Lebanese Armed Forces and Israel Defense Forces, including through the use of engineering equipment, were involved in 12 violations. A total of 113 (or 55 per cent) were committed either by shepherds with their flocks near the Shab'a Farms and Bastrah (Sector East) or farmers cultivating their fields around Rumaysh (Sector West). UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces regularly warned shepherds and farmers

not to cross the Blue Line. Most of the remaining violations involved farmers crossing to the Shu'ayb well, which straddles the Blue Line near Blida (Sector East).

10. Israel continued to violate Lebanese airspace almost daily, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006) and Lebanese sovereignty. From 1 November to 19 February, UNIFIL recorded 458 air violations of the Blue Line, totalling 1,684 overflight hours. Unmanned aerial vehicles accounted for 360 (79 per cent) of these violations; the remainder involved fighter or unidentified aircraft. UNIFIL protested all air violations to the Israel Defense Forces and urged their immediate cessation. The Government of Lebanon continued to protest the airspace violations, including in a letter addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me dated 8 February (A/72/742-S/2018/109). The Lebanese Armed Forces stated that such violations contribute to a sense of insecurity across Lebanon. Such violations of Lebanese sovereignty undermine the cessation of hostilities and efforts to reach a permanent ceasefire.

11. The Israeli occupation of northern Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line continued, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006) and Lebanese sovereignty. To date, Israel has not responded to the UNIFIL proposal submitted to both parties in 2011, aimed at facilitating the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces from the occupied area. The Lebanese Armed Forces informed UNIFIL in July 2011 of the agreement of Lebanon to the proposal.

12. Lebanon also protested alleged violations of its sovereignty by Israeli vessels and ships operating near the Israeli line of buoys. The delineation of the maritime boundary between the two countries continues to be disputed. Lebanon considers that the line of buoys, installed unilaterally by Israel, runs through its territorial waters and does not recognize it. The United Nations does not recognize the line of buoys.

13. Lebanon alleged that Israel continues to violate its sovereignty by conducting electronic monitoring, espionage and surveillance through infrastructure deployed south of and along the Blue Line, surveillance devices placed on Lebanese territory and surveillance networks active in Lebanon, which the Government of Lebanon considers to be electronic warfare.

14. In accordance with resolution 1701 (2006), UNIFIL continued to assist the Lebanese Armed Forces in establishing an area between the Blue Line and the Litani River free of unauthorized armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL. The Force stands ready to act within the full scope of its mandate and capabilities should there be credible evidence or information supporting the presence of unauthorized weapons or the imminent threat of hostile activity emanating from the area of operations. The Lebanese Armed Forces regularly reiterated their strong commitment to act immediately upon receipt of evidence of unauthorized armed personnel or weapons in the area in contravention of resolution 1701 (2006).

15. In the course of its activities, UNIFIL observed 442 instances of individuals carrying unauthorized arms in the area of operations in violation of resolution 1701 (2006). Almost all of these instances (439) involved civilians carrying hunting weapons, mostly in the areas of Yaroun (Sector West), Bastrah, Blida, Mays al-Jabal and Sarda (all Sector East), in the vicinity of the Blue Line. The remaining incidents, not involving hunting weapons, are detailed in annex I. In each instance, UNIFIL alerted the Lebanese Armed Forces and requested that they take appropriate preventive measures. The Lebanese Armed Forces informed UNIFIL that they continue to follow up on these incidents to prevent their reoccurrence. UNIFIL takes seriously any allegation regarding the presence of unauthorized weapons in the area of operations, but has not been able within its capabilities to substantiate them independently.

16. UNIFIL coordinated with the Lebanese Armed Forces daily to conduct inspections at permanent, temporary and co-located checkpoints. Lebanese security forces screened and spot-checked vehicles at these locations. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces operated a daily average of 19 temporary or permanent checkpoints. At the Litani Bridge (Sector West), UNIFIL maintains a 24-hour presence with the Lebanese Armed Forces.

17. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces conducted on average nine counter-rocket launching operations daily, across the area of operations. These operations inspected strategic areas from which rockets could be launched. UNIFIL acts in support of the Lebanese Armed Forces in these inspections, and is prepared to take action independently if required and in accordance with its mandate.

18. Israel raised with UNIFIL the issue of individuals in civilian attire, whom it alleged were Hizbullah operatives conducting "reconnaissance" towards areas south of the Blue Line. UNIFIL observed and closely monitored activities, including photography by persons wearing civilian clothes in areas south of the Blue Line. In addition, UNIFIL visited almost daily areas where the non-governmental organization "Green Without Borders" operates. UNIFIL observed no violations or hostile activities in connection with activities or installations of this organization during the reporting period. UNIFIL continued to closely monitor three locations in which the Israel Defense Forces alleged the presence of Hizbullah weapons and infrastructure in the UNIFIL area of operations as reported in my previous report.

19. Pursuant to paragraph 15 of resolution 2373 (2017), UNIFIL continued to increase its visible presence and activities, with a focus on preserving the cessation of hostilities. In monitoring the cessation of hostilities, UNIFIL sustained its operational tempo as well as non-operational activities to mitigate risks in a timely manner, thereby preventing small incidents from escalating into larger-scale violence. UNIFIL also continued to operationalize resolution 2373 (2017), by enhancing the visibility of its operations through intensified patrols, including at night and by helicopter. UNIFIL conducted patrols in all municipalities and villages in the area of operations at least once weekly, with many covered more often, when tensions had been reported. Observer Group Lebanon and the UNIFIL Civil Affairs Section continued activities throughout the area of operations daily without incident. To safeguard the cessation of hostilities, UNIFIL continued to closely monitor the situation along the Blue Line from fixed positions combined with mobile vehicle and foot patrols. Enhancing its visible presence, particularly in sensitive areas, the Mission conducted over 25,000 patrols during the reporting period, with an increase along the Blue Line from 2,428 patrols in October to 2,562 in January.

20. The freedom of movement of UNIFIL was generally respected, except on 10 occasions, mainly owing to the inconvenience to local communities caused by heavy military vehicles on narrow roadways in civilian populated areas (see annex II). In each case, UNIFIL responded within its mandate, followed up with the Lebanese Armed Forces and local authorities and subsequently ensured its freedom of movement in the incident locations.

21. UNIFIL expanded its proportion of foot patrols, both along the Blue Line and across the area of operations, with 1,767 patrols (24 per cent of all patrol activities) in January, up from 1,085 in August (16 per cent of all patrol activities). In a number of villages, for instance, Ayta al-Sha'b, narrow roadways and community concerns necessitated that patrols be conducted on foot. The increase in foot patrols has enhanced UNIFIL situational awareness and monitoring. UNIFIL maintained close contact with community leaders in southern Lebanon and the Lebanese Armed Forces, to address any sensitivities without compromising mandated tasks.

22. The improved use of air assets contributed to a 26 per cent increase in operational flights, including day and night reconnaissance flights, from August to 19 February. UNIFIL conducted 171 hours of helicopter patrols (42.5 hours per month) from November to 19 February, concentrated over areas with limited access. Private property, rugged terrain or terrain contaminated by explosive remnants of war limit access by UNIFIL patrols. Where the conduct of patrols in heavy vehicles is not feasible, UNIFIL conducted vehicular patrols in surrounding areas that allowed for closer monitoring. In addition, officers from the UNIFIL Liaison Branch and unarmed military observers from Observer Group Lebanon of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, as well as UNIFIL personnel on light vehicle and foot patrols, are deployed to achieve unimpeded access throughout the area of operations. Such areas are also monitored by regular helicopter patrols. With the exception of northern Ghajar, UNIFIL covered all of its area of operations either on foot, by vehicle or by air at least weekly.

23. The Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL continued to regularly review their modus operandi to enhance their close coordination. UNIFIL conducted 17 per cent of its patrols with the Lebanese Armed Forces. The Lebanese Armed Forces expanded their presence along the Blue Line by participating with UNIFIL in more than 1,205 foot and vehicular patrols. UNIFIL conducted 60 daily activities in close coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces. The Fifth Intervention Regiment of the Lebanese Armed Forces, deployed on 22 September, is fully integrated into the joint planning and operations of UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces. Approximately 22 per cent of UNIFIL operational activities with the Lebanese Armed Forces involve the Regiment.

24. The UNIFIL Maritime Task Force carried out maritime interdiction operations on a 24-hour basis and capacity-building for the Lebanese Armed Forces-Navy. From 1 November to 19 February, the Maritime Task Force hailed 2,312 vessels, 494 of which were inspected and cleared by the Lebanese authorities. The Lebanese Navy maintains a current maritime picture of its waters through the coastal radar system. The Lebanese Armed Forces Navy has the capacity to deploy small units, with limited crew capabilities, able to operate in calm weather for up to 24 hours. The Lebanese Armed Forces Navy requires at least six vessels and trained crews able to stay a minimum of 72 hours per week at sea, to assume maritime interdiction duties from the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force. UNIFIL is supporting the Lebanese Armed Forces in requesting international donor support for the provision of one offshore patrol vessel to augment its existing capacity. UNIFIL conducted 107 training sessions, covering land and maritime operational issues, to improve common operational standards between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces.

25. Relations between UNIFIL and the local population remained largely positive; UNIFIL continued its outreach and engagement with local communities. The Mission continued to identify and implement quick-impact projects to address pressing needs of local communities, support the extension of State authority in the South and contribute to force acceptance in line with the priorities identified by the Lebanese Armed Forces during the strategic review of UNIFIL (see S/2017/202). UNIFIL continued to work closely with the Lebanese Armed Forces to establish a Lebanese Armed Forces civil-military cooperation centre in Marjayoun (Sector East).

B. Security and liaison arrangements

26. In mid-January, the Israel Defense Forces confirmed to UNIFIL their intent to initiate what they said were "defensive engineering works" in several areas along the Blue Line. UNIFIL stressed to the Israel Defense Forces that such activities — in particular, in the previously identified Lebanese "reservations" areas — could trigger

a strong reaction in Lebanon and proposed that both parties convene and discuss the matter through the UNIFIL-chaired tripartite mechanism. My Acting Special Coordinator reinforced these messages in her engagements with both parties. Following a tripartite meeting on 5 February, both sides agreed to continue their engagement with UNIFIL to discuss these contentious issues. The Israel Defense Forces commenced work south of the Blue Line, in non-reservation areas, on 7 February. UNIFIL continues, in coordination with my Acting Special Coordinator, to encourage all sides to use the existing liaison and coordination channels to maintain calm.

27. UNIFIL also chaired tripartite meetings on 8 November and 7 December. The Lebanese Armed Forces stressed, on each occasion, the detrimental effect of Israeli violations of resolution 1701 (2006) and Lebanese sovereignty and emphasized the importance of meaningful progress towards a permanent ceasefire. The Israel Defense Forces underlined their concerns about reconnaissance activities allegedly conducted by Hizbullah along the Blue Line. The Israel Defense Forces also raised recurring incidents of stone throwing and Blue Line violations by farmers and shepherds. During all three meetings, the parties renewed their commitment to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), including respect for the Blue Line and maintaining stability, and voiced their willingness to explore paths towards a permanent ceasefire.

28. In addition to the tripartite forum, UNIFIL and the parties made extensive use of other established liaison and coordination arrangements to exchange information and avoid the escalation of tensions between the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces. In early November, UNIFIL liaison mechanisms helped ensure that the seasonal olive harvest in Blida concluded without incident. Similarly, liaison and coordination efforts helped ensure that a demonstration at Marun al-Ra's, against the Balfour Declaration, on 2 and 3 November, took place without incident.

29. The establishment of a UNIFIL liaison office in Tel Aviv, Israel, was discussed with the Israeli authorities. Their agreement to the UNIFIL proposal remains pending since 2008.

30. Progress in the visible marking of the Blue Line remained limited. Most points agreed upon by the parties have been marked. To promote progress, UNIFIL, in close coordination with my Acting Special Coordinator, emphasized the strategic value of the marking for the parties, both in bilateral and tripartite discussions. The process remains an important confidence-building activity.

31. In line with the recommendations of the 2017 strategic review of UNIFIL and resolution 2373 (2017) and through the strategic dialogue, the Government of Lebanon, the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL, including through a joint expert-level working group, developed the concept of a model regiment. On 5 February, the Lebanese Armed Forces informed UNIFIL of the formal establishment of a model regiment within the South Litani Sector as of 1 February, to be deployed once the requisite personnel and equipment have been secured.

32. UNIFIL continued to implement the recommendations of the strategic review, pursuant to the strategic priorities identified (see annex III). A reconfigured UNIFIL Maritime Task Force, which, as at 1 January, consisted of six vessels, continues to assist the Government in securing Lebanese territorial waters. With the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, UNIFIL promoted an integrated and comprehensive approach to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), in particular in supporting the Government of Lebanon to increase its presence in southern Lebanon and the capacity of the Lebanese Armed Forces, notably in relation to prioritized land and maritime capabilities and deployment in southern Lebanon. The Missions also focused on a range of preventive actions necessary to maintain calm along the Blue Line and in the area of operations.

33. In line with its strategic priority to ensure that it is prepared to deliver on its mandate to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, and following the strategic review, UNIFIL continued to train Mission personnel and in December conducted, with humanitarian partners, a multi-day exercise that tested protection of civilians procedures and protocols.

C. Disarming armed groups

34. No progress was achieved with respect to the disarmament of armed groups. The maintenance of arms outside the control of the State by Hizbullah and other groups continues to restrict the ability of the Government of Lebanon to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory. Hizbullah continued to acknowledge publicly that it maintains its military capacity. In an interview on 3 January 2018, Hizbullah Secretary-General, Hassan Nasrallah, underlined that the group was "working day and night ... to obtain all kinds of weapons that would enable it to achieve victory in the next war, if that war happens". The same day, a Hizbullah Member of Parliament Nawaf Moussawi reportedly warned that "the next war will not be geographically limited to the same confrontation areas of 2006 and that the resistance's ability to launch wide territorial operations is at an optimal level". On 29 January, a Hizbullah Member of Parliament Mohammad Raad was quoted by media as saying that "Hizbullah is stronger today and has capabilities that can destroy the Israeli Army."

35. The Government of Lebanon highlighted the importance of State sovereignty and national unity in the context of the Lebanese Armed Forces. In their forewords to the Lebanese Armed Forces capabilities development plan, presented on 12 February in Beirut, the Prime Minister of Lebanon underscored that the Lebanese Armed Forces are "the sole legitimate defender of the Lebanese State" and the need to "consolidate Lebanese State authority throughout all Lebanese territory and deny any presence to all non-state actors", while the President of Lebanon, Michel Aoun underlined that "Lebanon's internal stability is consolidated through ... the active role of the Lebanese Army, the Internal Security Forces, the General Security, the State Security and the Lebanese Customs."

36. As reported by the media, on 28 November, the Israel Defense Forces Spokesperson stated that "Hizbullah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah is an Israel Defense Forces target in the next war in Lebanon". On 28 January, the Israel Defense Forces Spokesperson alleged that "one in every three or four houses in southern Lebanon is a headquarters, a post, a weapons depot or a Hizbullah hideout", warning that "we know how to attack them accurately if required". On 31 January, the Minister of Defence of Israel, Avigdor Lieberman, warned that "the Lebanese Army and Lebanon are no different from Hizbullah," and would "all pay the full price", in the event of an attack on Israel.

37. The Lebanese Armed Forces and security forces continued counter-terrorism operations and arrests of individuals suspected of affiliation with or support for extremist groups. From 1 November to 28 February, 122 terrorism-related arrests were reported, including of suspected affiliates of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Nusrah Front, as well as suspects in the 2013 Abra clashes, the 2014 Haret Hrayk bombing and the 2015 Burj al-Barajinah terrorist attack. On 19 January, the Minister of Interior stated that security forces had thwarted an ISIL-linked terror plot targeting places of worship and government buildings over the holiday period. On 4 February, a suspected ISIL militant and a Lebanese Armed Forces soldier were killed, and six persons injured, in a raid in Tripoli, North Lebanon.

38. Armed clashes throughout Lebanon illustrated the continued presence of weapons outside of State control, posing a risk to stability. On 11 November, one Lebanese Armed Forces soldier was killed and four others wounded in raids against criminal gangs in Baalbek. On 10 December, a Lebanese Armed Forces soldier was injured by unidentified gunmen in Baalbek. On several occasions, personal disputes escalated into shooting, including in Baalbek, Dinniah and Tripoli.

39. The security situation in the Palestine refugee camps in Lebanon remained generally stable, except for clashes in the Ein el Helweh camp involving extremist groups and the joint Palestinian security forces, in addition to several personal disputes. A total of 4 people in the camp were killed and 11 injured. Several members of extremist groups left Ein el Helweh camp or surrendered to the Lebanese authorities. On 3 January, it was reported that Bilal Bader, the leader of an extremist group involved in numerous clashes, had fled to the Syrian Arab Republic. Intermittent violence also erupted in the Beddawi camp. A personal dispute led to two people being killed in the Rashidieh camp on 4 March.

40. On 14 January, a car bomb wounded a member of Hamas in Sidon. Following an investigation, the Lebanese Ministry of Interior announced on 26 January that a suspect had admitted to the attack. The suspect also claimed to have been assigned by Israeli intelligence agencies, a charge that Israel denied.

41. There was no progress in dismantling the military bases maintained by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada, which continue to compromise Lebanese sovereignty and impede the ability of the State to monitor and effectively control parts of the border.

D. Arms embargo and border control

42. In a letter addressed to the Security Council and myself on 28 November (S/2017/1000), the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations warned against "Iran's intentions and actions taken to continue arming Hezbollah" and subsequent military build-up by Hizbullah, including among civilians. The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, in a letter to the Security Council and myself dated 5 December (S/2017/1019), accused Israel of "false and baseless accusations". On 2 December and 9 January, media reported Israeli strikes on targets in the Syrian Arab Republic, using Lebanese airspace. On 28 January, the Israel Defense Forces Spokesperson likened Lebanon to "one large missile factory," in the context of "Iran's ever-tightening control".

43. Allegations of arms transfers to Hizbullah continued on a regular basis and are of serious concern. While taking such allegations seriously, the United Nations is not in a position to substantiate them independently.

44. Reports of Hizbullah's engagement in the fighting in the Syrian Arab Republic continued. A number of Lebanese nationals also allegedly continued to fight with non-State armed groups in the Syrian Arab Republic.

45. Following operations in August-September 2017 to expel militants, the Lebanese Armed Forces consolidated their deployment along the border with the Syrian Arab Republic, including through land border regiments. A sharp decrease in the incidence of cross-border fire from the Syrian Arab Republic into Lebanon was observed. Cross-border incidents mostly involved smugglers. On 16 January, the Lebanese Armed Forces raided an informal settlement for Syrian refugees at Arsal and arrested over 20 Syrian nationals suspected of connections with terrorist groups and arms trafficking. On 30 January, the Lebanese Armed Forces arrested 23 Syrian nationals and seized weapons in another raid carried out in other informal settlements

at Arsal. Seven people were accused of connection with terrorist groups and arms smugglers. On 14 December, Lebanese and Syrian authorities reopened the Qa'-Jusiyah border crossing, bringing the total number of crossings open between the two countries to five.

46. A small number of localized initiatives to encourage Syrian refugees to return took place, including by the Reconciliation Committee established by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in Bayt Jinn, across the border from Shab'a, South Lebanon. Neither the Government of Lebanon nor the United Nations were involved in those initiatives. While attempting to enter Lebanese territory via a smuggling route on 19 January, 16 Syrians (13 females and 3 males), including 5 children, froze to death.

E. Landmines and cluster bombs

47. Six UNIFIL mine clearance teams cleared 1,587 m^2 of land and destroyed 384 anti-personnel mines in the UNIFIL area of operations. The Mine Action Service conducted 35 quality assurance visits, and provided three safety training and awareness briefings to 130 United Nations personnel. Seven mine risk education sessions and events were held in collaboration with the Lebanese Mine Action Centre and the UNIFIL Civil Affairs and Military components, benefiting over 690 children.

48. Three incidents, one of which killed a 13-year-old boy, involving landmines and unexploded ordnance, were recorded in the UNIFIL area of operations. On 9 January, the Government of Lebanon wrote to the Security Council to condemn the incidents. The Lebanese Armed Forces continued to remove mines and explosive devices left by militants in the eastern border area of Lebanon.

F. Delineation of borders

49. No progress was made towards the delineation or demarcation of the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. The Syrian Arab Republic and Israel have yet to respond to the provisional definition of the Shab'a Farms area proposed in my report of 30 October 2007 on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2007/641).

50. On 14 December, the Cabinet of Lebanon awarded licences for offshore oil and gas exploration to a consortium of three international oil companies. The maritime area concerned includes "block 9", located in waters disputed between Lebanon and Israel. In a note verbale to me, dated 21 December, the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations called for the Government of Lebanon to cease "any action that would violate Israel's sovereign rights". In a note verbale to me dated 26 January, the Permanent Representative of Lebanon conveyed her Government's message, that "Lebanon will not hesitate to avail itself of its inherent right to self-defence if an armed attack occurs against the economic activities ... in its maritime areas". On 29 January, the Minister of Energy and Water of Lebanon signed the contracts for exploration and production. Hostile rhetoric followed, with the Minister of Defence of Israel, on 31 January, describing the move as provocative and asserting the claim of Israel over block 9. On 31 January, the Prime Minister of Lebanon noted that the Government would follow up with the relevant international bodies to assert the right of Lebanon to exert its control over its maritime waters. On 1 February, the President of Lebanon cautioned against plotting against Lebanon, vowing to counter Israeli claims by diplomatic means while asserting the right of Lebanon to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity by all available means.

G. Political and institutional stability

51. On 21 November, the Prime Minister, Mr. Hariri, returned to Lebanon and withdrew his resignation the following day. On 29 November, the President confirmed that Mr. Hariri would resume his leadership of the Government. On 5 December, the Council of Ministers of Lebanon issued a statement confirming its commitment to its ministerial statement of 28 December 2016, noting that Lebanon must be kept out of regional conflicts and the internal affairs of Arab countries, and reiterating its commitment to resolution 1701 (2006), the Taif Accords, and the Charter of the League of Arab States. There has been regular Cabinet and parliamentary activity since.

52. On 8 December, the International Support Group for Lebanon convened a high-level meeting in Paris. In its joint statement, the Group expressed its satisfaction over the return to Beirut of the Prime Minister, noting that it would "pay close attention to the implementation of the Council [of Ministers'] decision [on disassociation from any regional conflicts, and wars and from internal affairs of Arab countries] by all Lebanese parties" and calling "upon all Lebanese parties to implement this tangible policy of disassociation from and non-interference in external conflicts, as an important priority, as spelled out in previous declarations, in particular the 2012 Baabda Declaration". The Group reiterated the need for full implementation of and full respect for all United Nations Security Council resolutions, including 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). These messages were reinforced by the Security Council in a press statement of 19 December on the situation in Lebanon (SC/13130).

53. In his statement in Paris, the Prime Minister of Lebanon noted that the policy of disassociation would allow Lebanon to maintain its national unity while respecting the Arab consensus. The Prime Minister also confirmed that his Government would pursue the preservation of the best relations with Arab countries and the international community with respect to Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1701 (2006). On 23 February, the President of Lebanon stressed that Lebanon abides by the policy of disassociation.

54. The International Support Group for Lebanon called upon all Lebanese parties to resume discussions towards a consensus on a national defence strategy, welcoming the statement of the President on 6 December, in which he underscored that the national defence strategy was an issue on which it was possible to reach common ground through dialogue.

55. In its joint statement of 8 December, the International Support Group for Lebanon also called upon the international community to continue to coordinate and step up its support for the Lebanese Armed Forces and all State security institutions, crucial to the country's sovereignty and unity. A ministerial meeting on support to the Lebanese security forces is scheduled for 15 March in Rome, under the auspices of the International Support Group. In preparation, the five-year strategic plans of the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces were endorsed by the Higher Defence Council of Lebanon on 19 January and presented to the international community in Beirut on 12 February.

56. Preparations for parliamentary elections continue. On 4 January, the Cabinet approved an amended electoral budget of $33 million. On 22 January, the President and the Prime Minister signed a decree calling for parliamentary elections on 6 May. Out-of-country voting is scheduled for 27 and 29 April. On 1 February, the Ministry of Interior published the initial voters list for review. On 5 February, candidate registration commenced. Preparations for international and local elections observation are under way. United Nations technical assistance with the electoral

process, in support of the Ministry of Interior, continues, as do efforts to promote women's participation in the parliamentary elections.

57. Political tensions between rival parties erupted into street violence from 29 January to 2 February. Calm returned following a united appeal by the political leadership.

58. On 20 December, the Prime Minister of Lebanon presented the country's national strategy for the prevention of violent extremism to government, diplomatic and United Nations representatives. The strategy, developed by all 29 ministries, awaits endorsement by the Council of Ministers of Lebanon.

59. The Government is finalizing its capital investment plan for presentation at an economic conference for development through reforms and with enterprises to be held in Paris on 6 April. The Government is seeking to finance the $16 billion plan, designed to stimulate growth, employment and infrastructure, through public-private partnerships, concessional loans and bilateral assistance. Donors and financial institutions have called for complementary sectoral and structural reforms, as well as fiscal measures.

60. As at 31 January, 995,512 Syrian refugees were registered with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a part of the impact of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. New registrations of Syrian refugees by UNHCR remain suspended by the Government since 2015. A decrease in the number of registered Syrian refugees was due mainly to deaths, onward movements, resettlement and a small number of spontaneous returns to the Syrian Arab Republic.

61. In response, the international community allocated $1.68 billion to Lebanon in 2017, with $1.37 billion disbursed or committed for that year, including $1.24 billion to United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations under the 2017 Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, representing 45 per cent of the total appeal.

62. The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan appeal for 2018 was jointly launched on 1 February by the Government and the United Nations, requesting $2.68 billion to support 2.8 million people with humanitarian assistance, as well as investment in the country's public infrastructure, services and local economy. At the launch, the Prime Minister reiterated that there would be no forced returns of Syrian refugees.

63. The final results of the vulnerability assessment of Syrian refugees, a socioeconomic survey conducted by UNHCR, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund, confirmed that 76 per cent of households live below the poverty line (an increase from 71 per cent in 2016), with a total of 58 per cent of households living below the extreme poverty line (an increase from 53 per cent in 2016). Underscoring the increasing level of vulnerability, on 10 January, a Syrian refugee set himself on fire at a United Nations compound in North Lebanon.

64. Local authorities continue to report host community fatigue. Job competition was cited as a source of tension between host and refugee communities. In the last quarter of 2017, a growing number of municipalities threatened or implemented curfews and evictions against refugees, citing insufficient support for the municipalities or security or economic concerns. Evictions affected refugee households with respect to access to accommodation, basic services, children's education and livelihoods.

65. A number of demonstrations were held, including in reaction to the announcement by the United States on 6 December with regard to Jerusalem that also triggered widespread condemnation by Lebanese politicians. Following clashes between security forces and protesters in the vicinity of the United States Embassy in Beirut on 10 December, 43 persons were injured and 10 detained.

66. Tensions, especially among Palestine refugees, were precipitated by the announcement by the United States that it would withhold its contribution to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). UNRWA has adopted additional emergency measures to preserve temporarily its health, education, social security and camp improvement services in Lebanon. However, additional financial support will be necessary for UNRWA to continue its operations in the near term.

III. Security and safety of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

67. UNIFIL continually reviewed its security plans and risk mitigation measures, taking into account security threat warnings and closely coordinated with the Lebanese authorities. In the Arqub area (Sector East), strict security measures, including the use of armed escorts, remained in place for movements by United Nations personnel. The alleged presence of extremist elements in Ein El Helweh camp for Palestine refugees, situated in Sidon along the main supply route connecting the UNIFIL area of operations with Beirut, continues to pose a security concern, potentially affecting UNIFIL movements through the city. Lebanese security institutions maintain a strong presence in surrounding areas.

68. On 29 December, UNIFIL discovered the theft of 2,240 rounds of small arms ammunition from an armoured personnel carrier stationed inside a United Nations position near Haris (Sector West). An immediate investigation led UNIFIL to recover 200 rounds of ammunition close to the facility. On 30 December, the General Directorate of State Security and the Lebanese Armed Forces seized the remaining ammunition, except for 26 rounds, from eight local individuals who had intended to sell it. Six of the eight suspects were released under judicial control, as minors; two adults remain in detention. Upon completion of the police investigation, the Military Prosecutor transferred the case to an investigating judge.

69. Following an internal investigation into the incident, the UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander ordered an inspection of all UNIFIL units to ensure that all measures were in place for the safety of staff and premises, as well as for the secure storage of weapons and ammunitions, in line with United Nations standards, rules and regulations. UNIFIL remains in close contact with the Lebanese authorities as the investigation continues. In accordance with United Nations procedures, UNIFIL has convened a board of inquiry.

70. UNIFIL continued to monitor proceedings in Lebanese military courts against individuals suspected of planning or perpetrating serious attacks against UNIFIL. The Permanent Military Court held hearings on 16 January with regard to the attack against UNIFIL peacekeepers serving with the Spanish contingent in 2007 and in the case of terror intent opened in January 2014. The next hearings for both cases are scheduled for 10 April. In the case of an attempted serious attack against UNIFIL in 2008, in which one of the four sentenced perpetrators filed an appeal, the Military Court of Appeal held a hearing on 6 February; the next hearing is scheduled for 21 June. Three investigations launched into the serious attacks perpetrated against UNIFIL on 27 May, 26 July and 9 December 2011 are ongoing, pursuant to additional judicial instructions issued by the investigating judge. In the case of the homicide committed in 1980, when two UNIFIL peacekeepers from Ireland were shot dead and one injured, the Permanent Military Court held a final hearing on 9 January, but deferred to 27 March a decision to either render a sentence or re-open the case for further investigation.

IV. Deployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

71. As at 22 February, UNIFIL comprised 10,506 military personnel, including 411 women, or 4 per cent of the Force, from 41 troop-contributing countries; 238 international staff, including 78 women; and 580 national civilian staff, including 150 women. The UNIFIL Maritime Task Force comprised five corvettes, one frigate, one helicopter and 752 of the Force's total military personnel, including 23 women. In addition, 56 military observers, including 6 women, from the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, serve with Observer Group Lebanon, under the operational control of UNIFIL.

V. Conduct and discipline

72. Neither UNIFIL nor the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon received allegations of sexual exploitation or abuse during the reporting period. Both entities continued to implement existing measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. The United Nations continues to promote an environment in which staff feel able to report any case that might arise. In accordance with UNIFIL communications strategy, UNIFIL personnel and members of the local community were informed of the expected standards of conduct for United Nations personnel and how to report misconduct, in particular in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse. The United Nations country team prevention of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse network in Lebanon continued to develop information-sharing protocols and to share best practices.

VI. Observations

73. Crises in the region continue to pose a risk to the stability of Lebanon, the fragility of which was illustrated by the resignation, later rescinded, of the Prime Minister, Saad Hariri. The meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon in Paris of 8 December was a welcome reiteration of the international community's support for Lebanon's stability, security and sovereignty. I echo the Group's call upon all Lebanese parties for tangible steps on the policy of disassociation, consistent with the Baabda declaration of 2012, and on all States and organizations to support the country's stability and security, with full respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

74. As regional tensions persist, I note the Prime Minister's statement of 22 November that disassociation from external wars is critical to protect Lebanon. Unauthorized visits by foreign militia members to South Lebanon undermine the State authority and run contrary to the spirit of disassociation.

75. I reiterate my call upon all Lebanese parties and nationals to cease their involvement in the Syrian conflict. I note the significant reduction in shelling, shooting, incursions and attacks into Lebanese border areas from the Syrian Arab Republic. I continue, however, to condemn the movement of fighters and war materiel across the Lebanese-Syrian border in violation of resolution 1701 (2006). The lack of a delineated, demarcated Lebanese-Syrian border does not justify violations of Lebanese sovereignty by any party. I call upon all concerned to cease violations of the border and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon.

76. The Lebanese Armed Forces continue to demonstrate their crucial role in the extension of State authority throughout the territory of Lebanon, defending the

country's sovereignty and territorial integrity and acting as the protector of the country's security. I encourage continued cooperation among the Lebanese security agencies, which has been key to recent security achievements, including in countering the threat of terrorism.

77. The presence of unauthorized weapons in the hands of Hizbullah remains of serious concern and warrants condemnation. The presence of those weapons, together with threatening rhetoric from both sides, heightens risks of miscalculation and escalation into conflict. I call upon the parties to exercise restraint at all times. Pursuant to resolution 1701 (2006), I call upon the Government of Lebanon to take all actions necessary to ensure the full implementation of the relevant provisions of the Taif Accords and of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), which require the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon so that, pursuant to the Lebanese Cabinet decision of 27 July 2006, there will be no weapons or authority in Lebanon other than those of the Lebanese State.

78. I welcome the statement by the President of Lebanon, Michel Aoun, of 6 December recognizing the importance of a dialogue towards a national defence strategy to reinforce stability and strengthen unity in Lebanon. I reiterate my request to the Lebanese authorities for the resumption of the national dialogue, with the objective of formulating a national defence strategy that would address the presence of armed individuals and groups outside of State control. The Lebanese Armed Forces are the sole legitimate defender of the security, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. Earlier decisions of the national dialogue should be implemented, specifically those relating to the disarmament of non-Lebanese groups and the dismantling of the military bases of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada.

79. Continued adherence by all sides to resolution 1701 (2006) remains essential for the stability of Lebanon and the region. I am heartened by the Prime Minister's reiteration of his commitment in this regard. I remain concerned, however, about the lack of full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and the unfulfilled obligations of Lebanon and Israel. Non-compliance increases the risk of tensions and possibly escalation into hostilities. I call upon both parties to redouble efforts towards full adherence to resolution 1701 (2006) to bolster stability and prevent conflict. The continued commitment of Lebanon and Israel to resolution 1701 (2006) is of paramount importance.

80. UNIFIL continues to fulfil its mandate to assist the Lebanese authorities in establishing an area between the Litani River and the Blue Line free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and UNIFIL. The relative calm along the Blue Line, tested during the reporting period, should not be taken for granted. Recent discussions over construction work by Israel in areas of Lebanese reservation, illustrate the continued fragility of the situation. They speak to the need for progress towards a permanent ceasefire called for by resolution 1701 (2006), as a means of preventing conflict and moving from calm to durable stability and security for the communities living on either side of the Blue Line. In the meantime, it is essential that both parties refrain from unilateral actions that could increase mistrust and lead to miscalculations. I call upon both parties to avail of UNIFIL liaison and coordination arrangements. The open and constructive exchanges in the tripartite forum, including on long-standing violations of resolution 1701 (2006), are a testament to the commitment of the parties, as well as to their confidence in UNIFIL and the liaison and coordination arrangements. My Acting Special Coordinator for Lebanon will continue to deploy good offices and, together with the UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander, will continue to explore opportunities for confidence-building measures.

81. I am concerned about the use of bellicose rhetoric, in particular in the context of the dispute between Lebanon and Israel over their exclusive economic zones. I urge both parties to refrain from unilateral actions that carry the risk of escalation and that could impact the stability of Lebanon and the region. My Acting Special Coordinator will continue to engage with the parties to seek ways to lower tensions and, if possible, explore ways to move forward on this issue. I encourage both parties to adopt an approach that minimizes security risks and takes advantage of the confidence-building potential of mutually beneficial exploitation of maritime oil and gas resources.

82. I remain concerned about the continuation of Israeli overflights of Lebanese territory. The Israel Defense Forces continue to occupy northern Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line. These are clear violations of resolution 1701 (2006). I reiterate my condemnation of all violations of Lebanese sovereignty and reiterate my call for Israel to cease its violations of Lebanese airspace and to withdraw its forces from northern Ghajar and the adjacent area north of the Blue Line.

83. Deepened cooperation between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces will be critical in furthering progress in the strategic dialogue and on steps towards implementation of resolutions 1701 (2006) and 2373 (2017). A model regiment in South Lebanon, together with the decision of the Government of Lebanon to reinforce deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces south of the Litani River, is testament to the Government's commitment to extend State authority.

84. I welcome the progress made by the Government of Lebanon in its preparations for a ministerial meeting in Rome, under the auspices of the International Support Group. The commitment of Lebanon to resolutions 1701 (2006) and 2373 (2017) and the continued accountability and independence of its security forces, remain key to reaffirming and bolstering international support to the State security institutions. I look forward to co-chairing with Italy, on 15 March in Rome, the meeting under the auspices of the International Support Group for Lebanon, to support the Lebanese Armed Forces and security institutions.

85. I welcome the proactive steps that UNIFIL has taken to implement resolution 2373 (2017) including by enhancing the tempo, visibility and effectiveness of its operations. This remains an ongoing process and further adjustments continue to be considered. The emphasis by UNIFIL on prevention continues to be vital in safeguarding the cessation of hostilities. The United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNIFIL have also undertaken steps to ensure that the Security Council is provided with prompt, concrete and detailed reporting on violations of resolution 1701 (2006). The Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, visited UNIFIL and met with Lebanese and Israeli officials at the end of February, among other things to review the ongoing process of implementing the provisions of resolutions 1701 (2006) and 2373 (2017). The Secretariat will continue to maintain close contact with the parties, Council Members and troop-contributing-countries in the implementation of resolutions 1701 (2006) and 2373 (2017).

86. I am encouraged by the steady progress of UNIFIL in implementing the strategic review recommendations and look forward to continued progress in this regard, including on the identified priorities.

87. I am encouraged by signals of political will and determination to conduct the parliamentary elections on 6 May, the first since 2009. Renewing the mandate of the Parliament is a powerful step towards renewing the functioning of Lebanese institutions and ensuring accountability to the people of Lebanon, in line with the country's democratic tradition. It will be important to maintain confidence in the electoral process. I encourage the political parties to increase women's representation in Lebanese politics and include qualified women on their electoral lists. During the electoral period, I call upon all political leaders to maintain calm, exercise responsible

rhetoric, protect citizens' freedom of expression and ensure continued adherence to the Taif Accords and the Constitution of Lebanon. Peaceful, credible, transparent and inclusive elections will be important for the country's stability.

88. The most serious financial crisis in its 70-year history risks compromising the ability of UNRWA to provide critical services to the highly vulnerable Palestine refugee population in Lebanon, against the backdrop of overburdened Lebanese public services. UNRWA operations in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon are important for the promotion of stability and socioeconomic progress. I am grateful to those Member States which have advanced their annual commitments to enable UNRWA to continue operations in Lebanon in the near term, and look forward to significant additional financial support at the forthcoming ministerial conference to be held in Rome on 15 March.

89. The recent tragic deaths of refugees illustrate the desperation of those seeking safety and serve as a reminder that the situation inside Syria remains volatile. I commend the generosity and hospitality of the Lebanese people and authorities in hosting Syrian refugees and welcome recent statements by the Prime Minister that refugee returns will be in line with international norms and under United Nations auspices. Until conditions are met in Syria for a safe, dignified and voluntary return, in line with international standards, including the principle of non-refoulement, I reiterate the importance of the redoubling of their efforts by international partners and of creating a hospitable protection environment. A recent UNHCR survey shows that return home is the most sought-after solution by the refugees themselves. The protection and dignity of refugees in Lebanon must be ensured until they can find durable solutions outside of Lebanon.

90. Continued international assistance to refugees and host communities will be key in this regard. It is important to increase support to the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan and the predictability of its funding for 2018 and beyond. I wish to reiterate the importance of providing flexible and predictable multi-year support to Lebanon, as well as ensuring timely disbursement of funds, in accordance with the commitments made at the London Supporting Syria and the Region conference, held in February 2016, and the Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, held in April 2017. I look forward to strong multi-year engagements by donors, with a heightened focus on development funding.

91. I look forward to the implementation of structural and sectoral reforms, critical to the promotion of economic growth and job creation. In this regard, I welcome ongoing preparations ahead of the economic conference for development through reforms and with enterprises, including the finalization of the capital investment plan, to be held in Paris on 6 April.

92. I urge all Lebanese stakeholders to maintain the positive spirit of unity and national interest that marked the period following the Prime Minister's return. Consolidating calm along the Blue Line remains vital to prevent the risk of any incident sparking renewed conflict and derailing progress towards stability and prosperity. I encourage all stakeholders in Lebanon, Israel and the region to facilitate a conducive environment in this regard. The United Nations will maintain its unflinching engagement in support of Lebanon, and I am grateful for the international community's continued consensual backing of this agenda.

93. I extend my appreciation to all countries contributing military personnel and equipment to UNIFIL and Observer Group Lebanon. I commend Acting Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Pernille Kardel, and the Head of Mission and Force Commander of UNIFIL, Major General Michael Beary, for their leadership, and the civilian and military personnel of UNIFIL, as well as the staff of the Office of the Special Coordinator, for their continued efforts.

Annex I

Unauthorized weapons observed by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon from 7 November to 19 February

UNIFIL observed 442 instances of individuals carrying unauthorized arms in the area of operations in violation of resolution 1701 (2006). The overwhelming majority of these instances (439) involved civilians carrying hunting weapons, mostly in the areas of Yaroun (Sector West), Bastrah, Blida, Mays al-Jabal and Sarda (all Sector East), in the vicinity of the Blue Line. The remaining incidents, not involving hunting weapons, are listed below:

1. On 12 November, an individual fired a pistol in the air multiple times near Bayt Lif (Sector West).

2. On 23 November, two men with automatic rifles were observed outside a funeral ceremony near Bint Jubayl (Sector West).

3. On 8 December, two individuals fired ten shots in the air from a civilian vehicle near Markaba (Sector East).

Annex II

Restrictions on the freedom of movement of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon from 7 November to 19 February

1. On 17 November, following negotiations, a UNIFIL patrol in the vicinity of Marjayoun (Sector East) returned to base after a Lebanese Armed Forces soldier claimed that the planned route would continue outside the UNIFIL area of operations, which would require prior authorization. The Lebanese Armed Forces later clarified that the issue stemmed from a misunderstanding, and the patrols continued along the route the following day.

2. On 21 November, two men in a vehicle stopped a UNIFIL patrol in the vicinity of Tiri (Sector West), advising the patrol that it would block a narrow village street and requesting it to utilize an alternate road and then continue on its planned route. After engaging with the individuals, UNIFIL used an alternate road briefly before returning to their planned route. UNIFIL informed the Lebanese Armed Forces.

3. On 12 December, two men stopped a vehicle in a UNIFIL patrol near Bayt Lif (Sector West). The patrol left the area and returned shortly afterwards with a Lebanese Armed Forces escort to continue along the planned route. In a meeting the next day with the Mayor of Bayt Lif, he explained that the individuals were concerned about the patrol obstructing traffic in the village.

4. On 15 December, a man stopped a UNIFIL patrol in Bafiliyah (Sector West) and requested it to turn around. UNIFIL left the area and returned with a Lebanese Armed Forces escort to resume the patrol. The Mayor of Bafiliyah subsequently told the Civil Affairs Section that the community preferred that UNIFIL be accompanied by the Lebanese Armed Forces.

5. On 18 December, two individuals with a vehicle stopped a UNIFIL patrol near Siddiqin (Sector West). Despite negotiations with accompanying Lebanese Armed Forces personnel, the patrol was unable to proceed further. The joint patrol used an alternate route to complete the operational activity. After subsequent discussions between the UNIFIL Civil Affairs Section with the Mayor and community of Siddiqin, UNIFIL patrols have proceeded since on the route without incident.

6. On 18 January, a UNIFIL patrol encountered a locked gate along the planned route near Arab al-Wazzani (Sector East). The patrolled bypassed the gate and completed its scheduled assignments.

7. On 9 February, a UNIFIL vehicle patrol passed a roadblock south of Rashaf (Sector West). An individual in civilian clothes in a vehicle followed the patrol into Rashaf and gestured the patrol to leave the area. On its way back, after completing its scheduled assignment, the patrol discovered a second roadblock located about 600 metres away from where it had encountered the first roadblock.

8. On 12 February, municipality police officers stopped a UNIFIL patrol from passing through Ayta al-Sha'b (Sector West). Following an intervention by the Lebanese Armed Forces personnel patrolling with UNIFIL, the patrol continued on its planned route.

9. On 14 February, six individuals stopped a UNIFIL patrol in Tiri (Sector West) and gestured to the patrol to leave the area by hitting the vehicle bonnet. The patrol continued its activity by using an alternate route.

10. On 18 February, an Observer Group Lebanon vehicle with two observers was stopped north of Ramiyah (Sector West) by three unidentified individuals who politely but repeatedly asked the patrol to leave the area. The patrol turned round without completing its mission. Observer Group Lebanon, together with UNIFIL, is following up with the Lebanese Armed Forces on the incident.

Annex III

Update on the implementation of the recommendations of the 2017 strategic review of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

1. Further to the letter dated 8 March 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/202) communicating the strategic priorities and key recommendations of the strategic review of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), the present overview provides an update on progress in the implementation of those recommendations.

Protection of civilians

2. UNIFIL continued its liaison with interlocutors from the Government of Lebanon on the protection of civilians and continued its close coordination with the Office of the Special Coordinator for Lebanon and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Lebanon.

3. As part of ensuring mission-wide preparedness, UNIFIL continued to roll out one-day training modules on the implementation of its protection of civilians mandate. Building on the contingency plan and the logistics plan for the protection of civilians, developed in 2017, UNIFIL plans to undertake its first protection of civilians exercise in close coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces in March 2018.

Strategic dialogue mechanism

4. UNIFIL continued its support to the Lebanese Armed Forces, with the Deputy Force Commander and the Deputy Head of Mission engaging on a range of coordination and capacity-building issues.

5. With the assistance of UNIFIL, the Lebanese Armed Forces finalized a concept of operations for the model regiment, which included a proposed mission strategy, organizational structure, materiel requirements and deployment schedule. In coordination with the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, UNIFIL continued to assist the Lebanese Armed Forces in engaging international donors prior to the ministerial meeting in Rome, scheduled for 15 March. In addition to the model regiment, there is a particular focus on the provision of an offshore patrol vessel for the Lebanese Navy and the establishment of a Lebanese Armed Forces civil military cooperation centre.

6. With the financial support from UNIFIL and the Government of the Kingdom of Spain, initial construction works for the Lebanese Armed Forces civil military cooperation centre began in Marjayoun (Sector East); the centre is expected to be completed in mid-2018.

7. The Maritime Task Force continues to provide onshore and offshore training to the Lebanese Armed Forces Navy. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces Naval School have developed a training concept for 16 courses that will be conducted by November 2018. Meanwhile, the Lebanese Armed Forces has developed its own plan for non-cooperative boarding training.

Liaison and coordination with the parties

8. In January 2018, UNIFIL adopted new guidance and standard operating procedures on coordination to ensure optimal synchronization of action by Mission assets in crises or in case of an incident in the area of operations.

9. In addition, as part of the deployment of a second permanent Liaison Team south of the Blue Line, five staff officers were reassigned to the UNIFIL Liaison Branch. UNIFIL also continued advocating with Israeli authorities for the establishment of a liaison office in Tel Aviv.

Structure of the uniformed and civilian components of the Force

Land forces

10. In January 2018, UNIFIL issued an order aimed at increasing the frequency, depth and effectiveness of coordination between the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL.

Maritime Task Force

11. The Maritime Task Force currently comprises six vessels: five corvettes and one frigate (in lieu of a corvette). The authorized maximum number of Maritime Task Force personnel has been reduced to 780. UNIFIL continued to support the Lebanese Armed Forces Navy in engaging donors about the requested provision of the above-mentioned offshore patrol vessels.

Community outreach activities

12. UNIFIL continued to make progress on the recommendations pertaining to community outreach activities. The community outreach board, formed in mid-2017, continued to convene on a quarterly basis, while the subcommittees on strategic communication and programme/project activities meet on a weekly basis to coordinate quick-impact projects and other outreach activities.

13. The Mission has finalized its list of quick-impact projects for 2018–2019, giving priority to sensitive villages along the Blue Line and areas where the battalions with limited or no national project funds are deployed. In addition, UNIFIL is increasingly involving the Lebanese Armed Forces in no-cost community and programmatic activities, such as market patrols.

14. UNIFIL completed the analysis of the public perceptions survey, which was presented in September, and provided its recommendations on strategic communication and public information to the Mission leadership. The Mission is examining options, within existing resources, to employ a second public opinion polling in the coming months.

Liaison in Beirut

15. Throughout the reporting period, UNIFIL and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon met regularly with representatives of the Lebanese Government, the Security Council and troop-contributing countries on a range of issues, including the model regiment initiative. In December 2017, UNIFIL deployed a senior representative in Beirut to continue engagement with relevant counterparts. In addition, UNIFIL continued to liaise with relevant United Nations agencies, through regular country team coordination meetings, and contributed to the countrywide integrated strategic framework for 2018.

United Nations S/2018/211

Security Council

Distr.: General
9 March 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 9 March 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you the attached letter from France, the United Kingdom and the United States to the Secretary-General in advance of his forthcoming report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2401 (2018) (see annex). France, the United Kingdom and the United States express their concern at the repeated reports of incidents inconsistent with that resolution by the Syrian regime and its allies.

I would be most grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Jonathan **Allen**
Chargé d'affaires

18-03722 (E) 140318

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Annex to the letter dated 9 March 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I am writing on behalf of France, the United Kingdom and the United States in advance of your forthcoming report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2401 (2018). France, the United Kingdom and the United States express their concern at the repeated reports of incidents inconsistent with that resolution by the Syrian regime and its allies.

In resolution 2401 (2018), the Security Council demanded that "all parties cease hostilities without delay, and engage immediately to ensure full and comprehensive implementation of this demand by all parties, for a durable humanitarian pause for at least 30 consecutive days throughout Syria, to enable the safe, unimpeded and sustained delivery of humanitarian aid and services and medical evacuations of the critically sick and wounded, in accordance with applicable international law".

Between the adoption of Security Council resolution 2401 (2018) and 27 February, there were 72 reported incidents of violence by the Syrian regime and its allies. Attacks reportedly involved shelling, surface-to-surface missiles, napalm, heavy machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades and barrel bombs in more than 14 locations across the enclave of eastern Ghutah. There continue to be reports of chemical weapon use. Such brutal attacks continue to kill hundreds of civilians, have caused massive damage to hospitals, residences and other civilian property, and are cruelly exacerbating the suffering of the civilian population.

According to United States sources, between 24 and 28 February, Russian military aircraft conducted at least 20 daily bombing missions in Damascus and eastern Ghutah.

Airstrikes have even continued during the hours of the so-called humanitarian pauses announced by Russia: between 27 February and 2 March, monitors on the ground documented at least 25 airstrikes by the regime or Russia during the five-hour pauses. At least 25 medical facilities have reportedly been attacked since 18 February.

As of 8 March, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 399 people, including 54 children and 45 women, are reported to have been killed since the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2401 (2018).

This deplorable situation is exacerbated by the continued inability of the United Nations and its partners to provide sufficient humanitarian assistance to the besieged population in eastern Ghutah. Only one humanitarian convoy has entered eastern Ghutah since the adoption of resolution 2401 (2018). On 5 March, a United Nations and inter-agency convoy entered Duma with health and nutritional supplies, along with food for 27,500 people in need; however, nearly 70 per cent of the medical supplies that had been loaded onto the convoy were removed by the Syrian security authorities. Vitally needed items, including all trauma kits, surgical supplies, items needed for dialysis sessions, and insulin, were removed. Furthermore, according to the United Nations, 14 of 46 trucks were unable to fully offload critical humanitarian supplies owing to violence in the area. Even if those supplies had been delivered, they would have satisfied the needs of only a fraction of the hundreds of thousands in need in the area. Nearly half of the food carried on the convoy could therefore not be delivered. Despite the specific call for the safe evacuation of the critically sick and wounded, no evacuations have taken place since February 24.

In addition, on 26 February, representatives of Jaysh al-Islam, Faylaq al-Rahman, Ahrar al-Sham, and activist groups in eastern Ghutah wrote to the

Secretary-General expressing their full support for resolution 2401 (2018). The letter contained further details of the commitment of those groups to support all aspects of the implementation of resolution 2401 (2018). Despite this, there has been no meaningful attempt by the regime to engage.

The Governments of France, the United Kingdom and the United States continue to call on all parties, in particular the Syrian authorities, to implement the provisions of resolution 2401 (2018).

(*Signed*) Jonathan **Allen**
Chargé d'affaires

United Nations S/2018/212

Security Council

Distr.: General
13 March 2018
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 9 March 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information bulletins from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic for the period 8 and 9 March 2018 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) V. **Nebenzia**

18-03859 (E) 140318 160318

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Annex to the letter dated 9 March 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (8 March 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 17 incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: 8 in Damascus, 6 in Ladhiqiyah and 3 in Aleppo.

The Turkish representative office has reported nine incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: five in Damascus, two in Hama and two in Idlib.

Most of the incidents of mortars and small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters belonging to terrorist groups.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

The Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has not carried out any humanitarian operations over the past 24 hours.

In total, 1,766 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,478.5 tons.

Safe passage was assured for a United Nations humanitarian convoy to Tall Shihab in Dar'a Governorate. The total weight of cargo delivered was 123 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 76 persons.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 72,750 persons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours one ceasefire agreement has been signed with Hawayir in Aleppo Governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 2,428.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (9 March 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 16 incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: 6 in Damascus, 5 in Ladhiqiyah, 4 in Aleppo and 1 in Dar'a.

The Turkish representative office has reported 11 incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: 9 in Damascus, 1 in Dar'a and 1 in Hama.

Most of the incidents of mortars and small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters belonging to terrorist groups.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

The Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic carried out a humanitarian operation to Darusha in Damascus Governorate. Food with a total cargo weight of 1.9 tons was delivered to the local population.

In total, 1,767 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,480.4 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 103 persons.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 72,853 persons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed with populated areas over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,428.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

United Nations S/2018/213

Security Council

Distr.: General
14 March 2018
English
Original: Arabic

Identical letters dated 9 March 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, and further to my letters of 2 January 2018 (S/2018/6), 5 January 2018 (S/2018/23) and 7 March 2018 (S/2018/207), I am writing to you to inform you of three incidents in which the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain violated the sovereignty of Qatar by air.

Incident 1. At 1530 hours on Sunday, 14 January 2018, a United Arab Emirates military transport aircraft (registration No. UAF 1211) was heading towards the emirate of Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. The aircraft was supposed to follow airway UP559. Instead, it followed another airway from the Ra's Tannurah area and, while over Qatari territorial waters, headed towards northern Qatar and in the direction of the United Arab Emirates at an altitude of 12,000 feet. The aircraft did so without prior authorization from the competent Qatari authorities (see the annexed chart of the aircraft's flight path).

The Bahrain air traffic control authorities were asked to move the aircraft away from Qatari airspace, because they are responsible for controlling air traffic in that area pursuant to the agreement concluded by Qatar and Bahrain within the framework of the International Civil Aviation Organization and had the right to instruct the aircraft to change its course. However, the Bahrain air traffic control authorities did not do so, although they were aware of a Notice to Airmen that prohibits any military aircraft from flying over Qatari territorial waters without the authorization of the competent authorities in Qatar.

Qatar deplores such conduct and holds the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain responsible for the above-mentioned violation and any legal effects arising therefrom. The United Arab Emirates, by its repeated violations of Qatari airspace, and Bahrain, thanks to the failure of its competent authorities to cooperate or respond, have set a grave precedent because they have failed to honour their commitments under international law and instruments that underpin State sovereignty. Qatar calls upon the above-mentioned States to comply with and respect international instruments.

Incident 2. At 1827 hours on Sunday, 25 February 2018, a United Arab Emirates C-130 military transport aircraft (transponder code 2151 (Mode 3)) took off from Sheikh Isa Airbase in Bahrain. The aircraft (registration No. UAF 1214) was heading to the emirate of Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, at an altitude of 21,000 feet and a speed of 340 knots. At 1854 hours, it was observed that the aircraft would enter Qatari airspace if it continued flying in the same direction. Radar control at

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Hamad International Airport was contacted and asked to tell the Bahrain airport to inform the aircraft's pilot that he must change course. At 1855 hours, when it reached the borders of Qatar some 51 miles from Doha at 236 degrees, communications were opened with the military aircraft via the VHF/UHF Guard system. The aircraft changed course and turned to the right, exiting Qatari airspace at precisely 1857 hours some 55 miles from Doha at 224 degrees (see the annexed chart of the aircraft's flight path and the violation).

Incident 3. At 1229 hours local time on Wednesday, 28 February 2018, a Bahraini military aircraft (transponder code 1211 (Mode 3)) entered the exclusive economic zone of Qatar some 63 miles from Doha at 324 degrees. The aircraft was flying at an altitude of 300 feet and a speed of 350 knots. Contact was made with the aircraft at 1229 hours via the VHF/UHF Guard system. An aircraft was ordered to take off immediately and warn the Bahraini aircraft, because it was flying over the exclusive economic zone of Qatar without prior diplomatic authorization from the competent Qatari authorities. At 1229 hours, the Bahraini aircraft left the exclusive economic zone some 85 miles from Doha at 314 degrees.

The United Arab Emirates and Bahrain continue to violate the airspace and sovereignty of Qatar. Their alarming conduct constitutes a flagrant violation of international law. Moreover, the above-mentioned States are continuing with their efforts to contrive incidents in order to heighten tensions in the region, without any consideration for the security and stability of Qatar. The Government of Qatar would like to draw the attention of the Security Council to Articles 34 and 35 of the Charter of the United Nations and calls upon the Organization to take the measures required under the Charter to maintain international peace and security, and put an end to the tendentious violations being committed by Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

In conclusion, Qatar would like to reaffirm that it is exercising the utmost self-restraint and striving assiduously to comply with the Charter of the United Nations and promote good-neighbourly relations. It condemns and rejects any violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and reserves its full right to respond to any violations, as is its inherent sovereign right under international law. Qatar reiterates that it will take the measures required to defend its borders, airspace, maritime space and national security, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter issued as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Alya Ahmed Saif **Al-Thani**
Permanent Representative

Annex to the identical letters dated 9 March 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the President of the Security Council

Iran
Airspace
Bahrain
Airspace
Qatar
United Arab Emirates
Airspace

United Nations S/2018/214

Security Council

Distr.: General
9 March 2018

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General concerning the credentials of the alternate representatives of Côte d'Ivoire on the Security Council

Pursuant to rule 15 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the Secretary-General wishes to report that he has received a letter dated 9 March 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations stating that Mr. Adjoumani Yao and Mr. N'Cho Virgile Akiapo have been appointed alternate representatives of Côte d'Ivoire on the Security Council.

In the opinion of the Secretary-General, that letter constitutes adequate provisional credentials.

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United Nations S/2018/215

Security Council

Distr.: General
12 March 2018
English
Original: Arabic

Letter dated 9 March 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Further to the letters that I had sent to the Security Council previously, the most recent of which was my letter of 14 February 2018 (S/2018/153), regarding the occupation of the Sudanese Hala'ib triangle by Egypt, I regret that I must inform you yet again that the Egyptian authorities are continuing their efforts, programmes, plans and measures to Egyptianize the Sudanese Hala'ib triangle, perpetuate their occupation and impose a fait accompli, in clear and flagrant violation of the relevant international instruments, including those concerning general international law and those concerning, in particular, international humanitarian law and human rights law.

In that connection, I should like to note that the Government of Egypt oversaw the signing of a protocol on cooperation between the General Authority for Red Sea Ports and the National Organization for Military Production in relation to the construction of fishing ports in Shalatin and Abu Ramad. The occupying authorities also launched the second phase of the project to expand the Red Sea desalination plant in Hala'ib and Abu Ramad. Moreover, the Egyptian Government has, for the first time, designated the Hala'ib region as an electoral district, and the Egyptian presidential election will be contested there at the end of the current month.

The above-mentioned measures fly in the face of the fundamental principles that underpin the Charter of the United Nations. Among those principles is the resolution of conflicts by peaceful means, including arbitration, something for which the Government of the Sudan has called should the Egyptian Government fail to end its occupation of the triangle. As we have stated before, we are calling for such measures to be taken by two States that have many ties.

International law, in general, and international humanitarian law, in particular, impose obligations on occupying States. The above-mentioned measures are not in line with the spirit that prevailed at the four high-level meetings that were convened by the two counties this past February. At those meetings, it was decided that all inflammatory measures would be halted in the Hala'ib triangle and that talks would be held on finalizing the framework for a solution to the crisis. I transmit to you herewith a non-exhaustive listing of violations committed by the Government of Egypt as it strives to Egyptianize the Hala'ib area and impose a fait accompli (see annex).

I should like to inform you once again that the Government of the Sudan rejects and does not recognize these measures and practices. I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Magdi Ahmed Mofadal **Elnour**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.
Permanent Mission of the Sudan to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 9 March 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Measures taken by the Egyptian Government to Egyptianize the Sudanese Hala'ib triangle (Hala'ib, Shalatin and Abu Ramad) and perpetuate its occupation thereof

1. On Tuesday, 27 February 2018, the Egyptian Minister of Transportation, Hisham Arafat, and the Egyptian Minister of Military Production, General Muhammad al-Assar, witnessed the signing of a protocol on cooperation between the General Authority for Red Sea Ports and the National Organization for Military Production in relation to the construction of fishing ports in Shalatin and Abu Ramad. The protocol was signed by the Chair of the Board of Directors of the General Authority for Red Sea Ports, General Hisham Abu Sanah, and the Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors of the National Organization for Military Production, General Hasan Abdulmajid.

2. The Egyptian Minister of Transportation said that the aim of the protocol was to catalyse cooperation between the Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Military Production, with a view to utilizing the ministries' expertise to develop ports on the Red Sea. To that end, the National Organization for Military Production will build two ice factories, each with a capacity of 20 tons per day; two desalination plants, one at Shalatin port and the other at Abu Ramad port, each with a capacity of 200 m^3 per day; two waste treatment plants; petrol stations; and electrical generators. It would also furnish the required equipment and generators, and carry out any electromechanical work needed at the fishing ports in Shalatin and Abu Ramad. The project is valued at 30 million Egyptian pounds.

3. The Egyptian Minister of Transportation also said that the project would be executed in accordance with international quality standards, and that it would make use of the expertise of the Ministry of Military Production to install fire suppression and alarm systems in accordance with the conditions, specifications and tender requirements established by the Fisheries Authority, Red Sea governorate, the General Authority for Red Sea Ports and project consultants. The fishing port at Abu Ramad will cover an area of 70,000 m^2 and cost approximately 120 million Egyptian pounds to build.

4. The Egyptian Minister of Transportation added that the fishing port at Abu Ramad is expected to serve 1,450 ships. The fishing port at Shalatin will cover an area of 150,000 m^2 and cost approximately 150 million Egyptian pounds to build. It is expected that the latter port will serve 1,780 ships. The ports will include piers for various fishing units, logistical services facilities, administration buildings, facilities and infrastructure. In addition, the scope of the projects includes the construction of yards, refrigerated storage facilities, shipping cranes, canopies, waiting areas, a petrol station, an ice factory and facilities for sorting and packing fish.

5. On Thursday, 1 March 2018, the Egyptian Minister of Housing and Facilities, Mustafa Madbuli, said that the Central Construction Agency, acting through its subsidiary, the Red Sea Construction Agency, had begun the second phase of the expansion of the desalination plants at Hala'ib and Abu Ramad, with a view to increasing the capacity of each by approximately 3,000 m^3 per day. According to the Egyptian minister, the expansion would be completed by September 2019, so as to meet the needs of development projects that have been planned for the area.

6. The occupying Power continues to plunder the mineral and marine resources of the area.

7. The Egyptian Government has, for the first time, designated the Hala'ib region as an electoral district, and the Egyptian presidential election will be contested there at the end of the current month. On Tuesday, 27 February 2018, the Deputy Speaker of the Egyptian Parliament, Sulayman Wahdan, addressed a rally in Shalatin that had been organized to support President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi. The Deputy Speaker called upon the crowd to recite what he called an oath of loyalty, which was as follows: I swear by God Almighty to preserve the country, protect its borders and stand with President Al Sisi in building the country.

United Nations S/2018/216

Security Council

Distr.: General
15 March 2018
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 12 March 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information bulletins from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic for the period 10–12 March 2018 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) V. **Nebenzia**

18-04067 (E) 150318 200318

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Annex to the letter dated 12 March 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (10 March 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported nine incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: five in Damascus, three in Ladhiqiyah and one in Aleppo.

The Turkish representative office has reported four incidents of gunfire: two in Damascus Governorate and two in Hama Governorate.

Most incidents of mortars and small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters belonging to terrorist groups.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

The Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation in Qatar, Aleppo Governorate. Food with a total cargo weight of 1.9 tons was delivered to the local population.

In total, 1,768 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,482.3 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 84 persons.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 72,937 persons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, one ceasefire agreement has been signed with Istiblat in Aleppo Governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 2,429.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (11 March 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 11 incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: 6 in Ladhiqiyah, 3 in Aleppo and 2 in Damascus.

The Turkish representative office has reported no violations of the ceasefire regime.

Most incidents of mortars and small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the Nusrah Front terrorist group.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

The Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has not carried out any humanitarian operations in the past 24 hours.

In total, 1,768 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,482.3 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 84 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 73,021 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, two ceasefire agreements have been signed with Tunah and Qal'at al-Madiq in Hama Governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 2,431.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (12 March 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 20 incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: 16 in Damascus, 2 in Aleppo and 2 in Ladhiqiyah.

The Turkish representative office has reported no violations of the ceasefire regime.

Most incidents of mortars and small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters belonging to terrorist groups.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation in Tabiyah, Dayr al-Zawr Governorate. Food with a total cargo weight of 1.9 tons was delivered to the local population.

In total, 1,769 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,484.2 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 203 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 73,224 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed with populated areas over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,431.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

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Prevention of armed conflict

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Letter dated 12 March 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon the instructions of my Government, I am transmitting herewith the record of the ceasefire violations by the Azerbaijani armed forces along the State border of the Republic of Armenia during the month of February 2018 (see annex I).*

I am also transmitting herewith the record of the ceasefire violations registered by the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh Republic) during the month of February 2018 (see annex II).*

I kindly request that the present letter and its annexes be circulated as a document of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 34, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Zohrab **Mnatsakanyan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* The annexes are being circulated in the language of submission only.

18-04278 (E) 220318

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Annex I to the letter dated 12 March 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Violations of the ceasefire by the armed forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan along the State border with the Republic of Armenia, 1–28 February 2018

Date	*Direction*	*Incidents*	*Type of weapons/shots*
February	**Tavush region**	**6**	Small arms and light weapons: 98
	Chinari	1	Small-calibre sniper weapons: 12
	Kolagir	1	Large-calibre sniper weapons: 4
	Movses	3	(Movses)
	Barekamavan	1	
February	**Tavush region**	**5**	Small arms and light weapons: 62
	Chinari	1	Small-calibre sniper weapons: 18
	Aygedzor	1	Large-calibre machine guns: 25
	Berkaber	2	
	Baghanis	1	
February	**Tavush and Ararat regions**	**5**	Small arms and light weapons: 8
	Paravakar	1	Small-calibre sniper weapons: 6
	Kayan	2	Large-calibre machine guns: 260
	Berdavan	1	
	Yeraskh	1	
February	**Tavush and Gegharkunik regions**	**5**	Small arms and light weapons: 76
	Aygedzor	1	Small-calibre sniper weapons: 2
	Berkaber	2	Large-calibre sniper weapons: 6
	Chambarak	1	(Ttujur)
	Ttujur	1	
5 February	**Tavush and Gegharkunik regions**	**3**	Small arms and light weapons: 90
	Voskepar	1	
	Barekamavan	1	
	Chambarak	1	
6 February	**Tavush and Gegharkunik regions**	**5**	Small arms and light weapons: 42
	Chinari	1	
	Berkaber	2	
	Geghamasar	1	
	Jil	1	
7 February	**Tavush region**	**7**	Small arms and light weapons: 75
	Kolagir	1	Small-calibre sniper weapons: 2
	Chinari	1	Large-calibre machine guns: 12
	Aygedzor	1	
	Aygepar	1	
	Movses	1	
	Vazashen	1	
	Kayan	1	

Date	*Direction*	*Incidents*	*Type of weapon/shots*
8 February	**Tavush and Gegharkunik regions**	**8**	Small arms and light weapons: 138
	Chinari	2	Large-calibre sniper weapons: 18
	Sarigyugh	1	(Geghamasar)
	Berdavan	1	
	Geghamasar	2	
	Vahan	2	
9 February	**Tavush, Ararat and Gegharkunik regions**	**16**	Small arms and light weapons: 463
	Chinari	4	Large-calibre sniper weapons: 12
	Aygedzor	3	(Chinari: 3; Aydedzor: 4;
	Paravakar	3	Paravakar: 5)
	Baghanis	1	Large-calibre machine guns: 45
	Paruyr Sevak	2	
	Agarak	1	
	Vahan	2	
10 February	**Tavush and Gegharkunik regions**	**13**	Small arms and light weapons: 109
	Chinari	4	Small-calibre sniper weapons: 2
	Kolagir	1	Large-calibre sniper weapons: 20
	Aygepar	1	(Chambarak)
	Paravakar	1	Large-calibre machine guns: 144
	Vazashen	1	
	Berkaber	2	
	Vahan	2	
	Chambarak	1	
11 February	**Tavush and Ararat regions**	**4**	Small arms and light weapons: 386
	Aygedzor	1	
	N. Karmiraghbyur	1	
	Berdavan	1	
	Yeraskh	1	
12 February	**Tavush region**	**8**	Small arms and light weapons: 46
	Aygedzor	2	Large-calibre machine guns: 650
	Chinari	1	
	Berkaber	2	
	Voskevan	1	
	Berdavan	2	
13 February	**Tavush region**	**9**	Small arms and light weapons: 154
	Kolagir	1	Small-calibre sniper weapons: 2
	Chinari	3	Large-calibre machine guns: 3
	Berkaber	2	
	Kayan	1	
	Baghanis	2	
14 February	**Tavush region**	**5**	Small arms and light weapons: 10
	Aygedzor	1	Small-calibre sniper weapons: 3
	Chinari	1	Large-calibre sniper weapons: 3
	Aygepar	1	(Berkaber)
	Berkaber	2	
15 February	**Tavush region**	**5**	Small arms and light weapons: 28
	Chinari	2	
	Aygepar	2	
	Berkaber	1	

Date	*Direction*	*Incidents*	*Type of weapons/shots*
16 February	**Tavush region**	**15**	Small arms and light weapons: 541
	Aygedzor	6	Small-calibre sniper weapons: 18
	Chinari	4	Large-calibre sniper weapons: 5
	Kolagir	1	(Aygedzor)
	Movses	1	Large-calibre machine guns: 30
	N Karmiraghbyur	2	
	Berkaber	1	
	There were no shots		
18 February	**Tavush and Gegharkunik regions**	**2**	Small arms and light weapons: 8
	Aygepar	1	Small-calibre sniper weapons: 10
	Ttujur	1	(Ttujur)
19 February	**Tavush region**	**6**	Small arms and light weapons: 12
	Chinari	2	Small-calibre sniper weapons: 13
	Aygepar	2	
	N Karmiraghbyur	1	
	Berkaber	1	
20 February	**Tavush region**	**2**	Small arms and light weapons: 2
	Kirants	1	Small-calibre sniper weapons: 10
	Berdavan	1	
21 February	**Tavush, Gegharkunik and Ararat regions**	**7**	Small arms and light weapons: 169
	Aygedzor	1	Large-calibre machine guns: 6
	Kirants	1	
	Voskepar	1	
	Baghanis	1	
	Geghamasar	1	
	Jil	1	
	Yeraskh	1	
22 February	**Tavush region**	**4**	Small arms and light weapons: 169
	N. Karmiraghbyur	1	Large-calibre machine guns: 2
	Berkaber	2	
	Voskepar	1	
23 February	**Tavush and Gegharkunik regions**	**12**	Small arms and light weapons: 91
	Chinari	2	Small-calibre sniper weapons: 3
	Paravakar	1	Large-calibre machine guns: 84
	Vazashen	3	
	Berkaber	1	
	Kirants	1	
	Kayan	2	
	Voskepar	1	
	Vahan	1	
24 February	**Tavush region**	**2**	Small arms and light weapons: 10
	Voskepar	1	Large-calibre sniper weapons: 1
	Sarigyugh	1	(Voskepar)
25 February	**Tavush and Ararat regions**	**4**	Small arms and light weapons: 18
	Aygepar	2	
	Dovegh	1	
	Yeraskh	1	
26 February	**Tavush region**	**1**	Small arms and light weapons: 4
	Aygepar	1	

Date	*Direction*	*Incidents*	*Type of weapons/shots*
27 February	**Tavush and Gegharkunik regions**	**16**	Small arms and light weapons: 431
	Aygepar	1	Large-calibre sniper weapons: 5
	Baghanis	3	(Ttujur)
	Koti	5	Large-calibre machine guns: 240
	Tshapatagh	2	
	Jil	1	
	Chambarak	1	
	Ttujur	3	
28 February	**Tavush region**	**10**	Small arms and light weapons: 102
	Chinari	1	Large-calibre machine guns: 55
	Movses	1	
	Vazashen	2	
	Berkaber	1	
	Kayan	1	
	Aygehovit	1	
	Berdavan	3	

During the reporting period, one soldier of the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia was wounded by gunfire from the Azerbaijani side.

Annex II to the letter dated 12 March 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Violations of the ceasefire by the armed forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the line of contact with the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh Republic), 1–28 February 2018

Date	*Direction*	*Incidents*	*Type of weapons/shots*
1 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	28	Small arms and light weapons: 311 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 18 Large-calibre sniper weapons: 2 (Ashaghi Veysali: 1; Kurapatkino: 1) Large-calibre machine guns: 7
2 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	23	Small arms and light weapons: 200 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 3 Large-calibre sniper weapons: 12 (Horadiz: 2; Ashaghi Veysali: 4; Yusifjanli: 3; Shikhlyar: 3)
3 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	25	Small arms and light weapons: 205 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 23 Large-calibre sniper weapons: 37 (Ashaghi Veysali: 6; Korgan: 5; Shikhlyar: 26)
4 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	30	Small arms and light weapons: 261 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 40 Large-calibre sniper weapons: 8 (Mehdili: 1; Ashaghi Seydakhmedli: 3; Geytape: 2; Talish: 2)
5 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	33	Small arms and light weapons: 350 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 13 Large-calibre sniper weapons:5 (Karachuk: 2; Yusifjanli: 2; Seysulan: 1) Large-calibre machine guns: 10
6 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	28	Small arms and light weapons: 209 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 12 Large-calibre sniper weapons: 1 (Chakhrli)
7 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	30	Small arms and light weapons: 249 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 15 Large-calibre sniper weapons: 2 (Karvend)
8 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	26	Small arms and light weapons: 208 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 11 Large-calibre machine guns:12
9 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	39	Small arms and light weapons: 384 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 16 Large-calibre sniper weapons: 3 (Sarijali) Large-calibre machine guns: 12

Date	*Direction*	*Incidents*	*Type of weapons/shots*
10 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	32	Small arms and light weapons: 189 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 22 Large-calibre sniper weapons: 16 (Shikhlyar: 9; Shurabad: 3; Gjulistan: 4)
11 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	30	Small arms and light weapons: 415 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 11 Large-calibre sniper weapons: 11 (Korgan: 5; Verin Chaylu: 6)
12 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	24	Small arms and light weapons: 265 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 6 Large-calibre sniper weapons: 26 (Ashaghi Abdurakhmanli) Large-calibre machine guns: 7
13 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	40	Small arms and light weapons: 494 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 26 Large-calibre sniper weapons: 10 (Seysulan) Large-calibre machine guns: 10
14 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	19	Small arms and light weapons: 347 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 11 Large-calibre machine guns: 6
15 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	25	Small arms and light weapons: 346 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 5 Large-calibre sniper weapons: 12 (Mehdili: 6; Bash Karvend: 6) Large-calibre machine guns: 15
16 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	27	Small arms and light weapons: 379 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 25 Large-calibre machine guns: 25
17 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	23	Small arms and light weapons: 218 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 11 Large-calibre sniper weapons: 1 (Horadiz)
18 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	22	Small arms and light weapons: 148 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 9
19 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	10	Small arms and light weapons: 37 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 12
20 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	27	Small arms and light weapons: 435 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 15
21 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	43	Small arms and light weapons: 632 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 24 Small-calibre mortars: 1 (Yusifjanli)
22 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	39	Small arms and light weapons: 275 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 28 Large-calibre sniper weapons: 18 (Ashaghi Abdurakhmanli: 12; Karakhanbeyli: 1; Kurapatkino: 5)

Date	*Direction*	*Incidents*	*Type of weapons/shots*
23 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	38	Small arms and light weapons: 614 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 35 Large-calibre sniper weapons: 19 (Mehdili: 5; Yusifjanli: 14) Large-calibre machine guns: 2
24 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	36	Small arms and light weapons: 228 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 10 Large-calibre sniper weapons: 10 (Ashaghi Abdurakhmanli: 6; Ashaghi Veysali: 4)
25 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	20	Small arms and light weapons: 165 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 14 Large-calibre sniper weapons: 3 (Ashaghi Veysali: 2; Gjulistan: 1)
26 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	29	Small arms and light weapons: 262 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 15 Large-calibre sniper weapons: 1 (Seysulan) Large-calibre machine guns: 7
27 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	36	Small arms and light weapons: 504 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 15 Large-calibre sniper weapons: 1 (Ashaghi Veysali)
28 February	On the line of contact between the armed forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan	27	Small arms and light weapons: 264 Small-calibre sniper weapons: 17 Large-calibre sniper weapons: 5 (Ashaghi Veysali) Grenade launchers: 1

During the reporting period, two soldiers of the Defence Army of Artsakh were killed and two soldiers were wounded by gunfire from the Azerbaijani side

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Letter dated 13 March 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter from the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Theresa May, to the Secretary-General regarding the attack in Salisbury on 4 March (see annex).

I would be most grateful if you could circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Jonathan **Allen**

18-03892 (E) 130318

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Annex to the letter dated 13 March 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On 4 March, Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia Skripal were poisoned in Salisbury and remain in a critical condition. Detective Sergeant Nick Bailey, a police officer who was also exposed in the attack, remains seriously ill. Specialist military troops have been deployed to assist in the investigation and to secure the sites of contamination. Hundreds of members of the public have been affected by this incident.

The United Kingdom police have conducted a thorough investigation, which has identified that the chemical that was used in Salisbury was a specific nerve agent from a class of chemical warfare agents known as Novichoks. These were originally developed by the Soviet Union, and then inherited by the Russian Federation. Novichoks are highly toxic poisons that prevent the normal functioning of the nervous system. Their fabrication requires production techniques inside a controlled laboratory with experts with experience of handling highly toxic agents safely.

As I stated to the Parliament of the United Kingdom yesterday, the British Government believes that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation was responsible for this attack. No country except Russia has the combined capability in chemical warfare, intent to weaponize this agent, and motive to target the principal victim. This action is consistent with a well-established pattern of Russian State aggression. The Foreign Secretary made clear to the Russian Ambassador in London on 12 March that this leaves only two possible scenarios. Either the Russian State has attempted murder on British soil using a chemical weapon or Russia has lost control of its stockpile of nerve agents.

The Foreign Secretary asked the Russian Ambassador to explain which of the two possibilities was true and to account for how this Russian-produced nerve agent could have been deployed in Salisbury against Mr. Skripal and his daughter. He also stated to the Ambassador that the Russian Federation must immediately provide full and complete disclosure of the Novichok programme to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. He has requested the Russian Government's response by the end of Tuesday, 13 March.

The United Kingdom is determined that those responsible for this crime be brought to account in accordance with the rule of law. This attack on British soil using a banned chemical weapon is not only a crime in its own right, but a clear challenge by a State Member of the United Nations to the rules-based international order. As such, it must be addressed with the support of the international community.

(*Signed*) Theresa **May**